

193

THE DECORATION OF
THE CROSS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE DECORATION OF THE CROSS

AND OTHER PAPERS FROM FRANCE

193

BY

JOHN A. PATTEN, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO H.M. FORCES

WITH A FOREWORD BY

REV. JOHN KELMAN, D.D.

SECOND IMPRESSION

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To

THE REV. J. M. SIMMS

C.M.G., D.D., K.H.C.

PRINCIPAL CHAPLAIN TO THE BRITISH ARMIES
IN FRANCE

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
IN ADMIRATION AND GRATITUDE

PREFACE

THESE papers were written on active service, which is to say they were written under varying conditions. My "study" changed from time to time by force of circumstances. Sometimes it was a billet in a French village, sometimes a little wooden hut, sometimes a tent, and sometimes a dug-out. My library consisted of two books—the Bible and men. Carlyle said that the true university is a library of books. Greatly daring I would correct the sage and say that the true university is the Book of God and the Book of Humanity; at least I have found it quite a passable school of learning—a hard school, perhaps, but effective.

The story of the war on the Western Front has already been well told by many a writer, and my ambition does not lie in that direction. I have simply tried to understand what is

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happening out here from another point of view. I have looked for God where at first sight He is not to be seen at all, and I have found Him everywhere. I am not blind to the faults of character and life that exist in an army that is numbered by the million, but after nearly two and a half years of active service I believe in our men more than ever, and I love them more than ever. Many of them are living in conscious loyalty to Jesus Christ, and they are the salt of the army; others, with less profession of faith, are so unbelievably brave, generous, and unselfish that one is ashamed before them. The chaplain may preach to them; they certainly preach to the chaplain, and this little book places on record some of the sermons they have given him.

Nearly every man on active service feels that the real sufferers in this war are the fathers and mothers and wives at home. They can only wait, and waiting is the hardest of all ordeals. Torn by anxiety, worn out by suspense, and often, too often, alas! struck dumb with grief, they are as heroic as any

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soldier in the battle-charge. It is my hope that this volume may bring some comfort to those who have lost their loved ones in the war, or rather that it may turn their thoughts and hopes towards Christ, Who alone can help.

The three sermons at the end of the book were preached before I went to France. The first, "Our Refuge in War Time," was preached at my Church at Seacombe, on getting back from an interesting journey through Canada and the United States at the outbreak of the war; the second, "The Out-stretched Arm," was an address at Clipstone Park Camp at the time when our thoughts were turning eagerly towards France; and the third, "The Dying Seed and the Living Harvest," was a Harvest Festival message spoken to a gathering of men on the eve of departure for the Front. That message was richly illustrated a few months later by many of the men who heard it, for, as I can testify, they laid down their lives so willingly, content to be as the Dying Seed for the sake of the Living Harvest that is to be.

Preface

Some of these papers have appeared in the "Christian World," and I am indebted to the Editor of that journal for permission to reproduce them. I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Kelman for his kindness in writing the Foreword.

J. A. P.

FRANCE,
March, 1918.

FOREWORD

THIS book reveals the man who wrote it. When I met him among the soldiers of his regiment in France I felt immediately the effect of his personality, and knew the quality of his work. He is one who puts himself into a fellow's place, and knows what life feels like to him who has to live it; and so he writes with that understanding which only sympathy and true comradeship can give. Faith also has given him insight. He despises cynicism, and is an optimist whom two years of the war have confirmed in his optimism. He hates war with all his soul, and yet in this war he backs his country with unflinching conviction. He knows quite well the moral dangers and tragedies that are in it, and yet sees a wonderful vision of the good that is coming out of its hideous evil. In his own memorable words, "I have looked for God where at first He is

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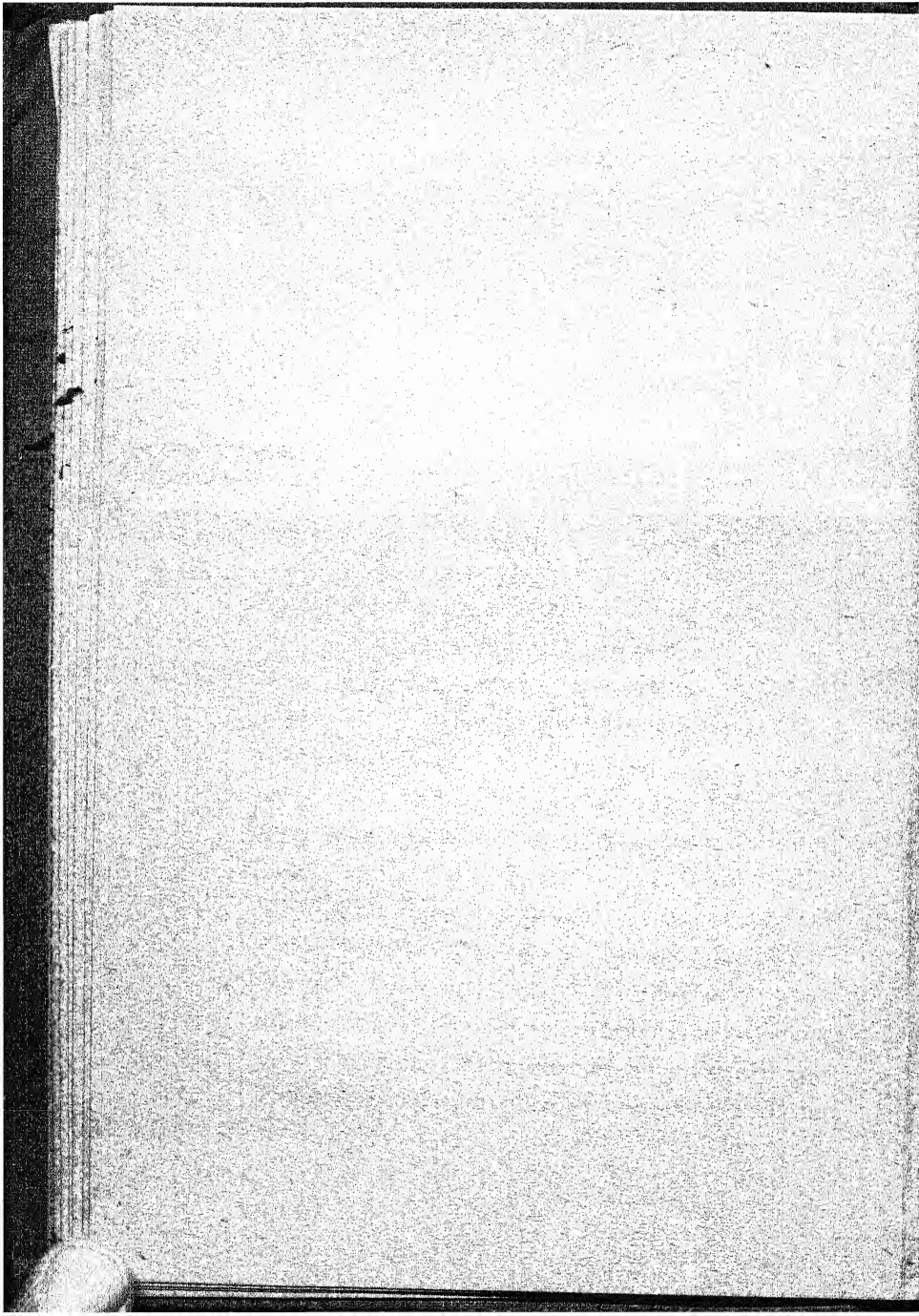
not to be seen at all, and I have found Him everywhere."

Many books have been written about the war, but if they had been twice as many there would still have been room for this one. It is the book we have been looking for and sorely needing. Its distinction lies in its courageous and accurate spiritual interpretation of the situation in detail. It falls like a benediction on the tortured fields of Flanders and of France.

JOHN KELMAN.

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THE DECORATION OF THE CROSS

I

THE DECORATION OF THE CROSS

INTO the hard and monotonous life of the soldier there may come a moment of light and glory—the moment when he learns that his services have been recognised by his country in the bestowal of some military honour. Perhaps he had behaved gallantly in the charge upon the enemy's trench ; perhaps he had held on to some strategic point against great odds ; perhaps his daring had saved the lives of many of his comrades. That deed had been noted even amid the excitement and clamour of battle, and in due time reaped the reward of recognition. The Distinguished Service Order or Military Cross, the Distinguished Conduct Medal or Military Medal—these honours mean

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a great deal to officers and men who are fortunate enough to win them. For a time at least, the soldier's life seems more tolerable, and even possesses a certain glamour. They feel pardonably exultant that their work has won the praise and reward of the authorities ; in gladness of heart they face the tasks and dangers of the future. The man who gains the supreme honour of the Victoria Cross must experience this exultation in a supreme degree, and his career as a soldier takes on a fresh force and interest. Later may come the experience of receiving the honour from the hands of the King—an act of graciousness that must mean much to the gallant soldier.

But, in the nature of things, rewards of this kind come only to a small proportion of the great armies of men who are fighting their country's battles. The rarity of the honours is the degree of their distinction, and they are distributed by a careful hand. What is there to be said about the millions of brave men who endure and suffer, fall and die, without one word of praise, without the bestowal of any honour ? Their names appear daily in the

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casualty lists, and that is all. Are they only heroes who have won some recognised badge of honour ? Are the recipients of the Victoria Cross the only men who have become the incarnation of heroism ? Is there no badge of honour except that which the King bestows ? Is there no mark of distinction except a mention in despatches ?

St. Paul cried out in vindication of his life and work : " I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He meant that his sufferings were self-explanatory—a vindication of his career as an apostle of Jesus Christ. His broken body, his enfeebled health, his bent shoulders, his care-lined face—all these were symbols of his faithfulness. The mark of the Lord Jesus was upon him ; the *stigmata* of Christ justified him in the sight of all men. He needed not the praise and rewards of the world ; it was enough that the hand of suffering had touched him, that the Cross of Christ had been laid upon him. At a later period, Francis of Assisi, a direct spiritual descendant of St. Paul, might have made the same proud boast. Indeed, it is said that St. Francis had

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the *stigmata* upon his body in a very real sense ; that the wounds of the Cross appeared in his hands and feet. So much had he loved his Lord ; so tenderly had he clung to the Cross ; so faithfully had he inculcated the spirit of sacrifice which was in Christ Jesus, that the very nails of Calvary left their mark upon his body. The Master honoured the servant in the highest possible way by bestowing upon him the Decoration of the Cross.

That exultant cry upon the lips of St. Paul and that beautiful story from the life of St. Francis suggest one and the same truth. The real rewards of service are not bestowed externally—they are borne in the innermost places of a man's being ; they are the fruit of the sacrificial life. They are independent of human judgment and recognition ; they spring out of a condition of heart. The truth of this is apparent to any man who knows intimately the life of the soldier on active service. The large truth is that every man who goes into the ordeal of war from the highest motives, fighting from a sense of duty even though he hates it all carrying out his task however

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hard and dangerous, keeping his heart loving and tender with thoughts of home, receives God's honour—the Decoration of the Cross, the Cross of Calvary. I can write of what I have seen and know. I can speak of what I have learnt after nearly two years at the Front, and I can bear this testimony: the army is full of men who are living their lives in the very spirit of Christ—the spirit of sacrifice, unselfishness and brotherly kindness. One learns these things in so many ways. A word let slip—a word that reveals a heart of pure gold—will haunt the memory for long. Rough, uncouth fellows, lads who have had little or no religious training, and make no profession of serving Christ, are yet serving Him—may Heaven forgive us!—far better than many of us who have been nurtured in Christian homes, and trained in Christian truth and ideals. I write these words in great humility, and with a sense of shame—I have seen more real Christianity in a soldier's billet than in some of our churches. If Christianity means a life of sacrifice cheerfully lived, and a death serenely accepted, then Christianity is to be

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found here. Many of our soldiers are earning the imperishable honours which God alone bestows ; all unconsciously they are wearing the Decoration of the Cross.

The *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus can be seen upon the bodies of our soldiers. Never can I watch a group of men returning wearily from the trenches, without seeing in their exhausted frames and tired eyes the symbol of their sacrifice. It may be said that such a statement is poetical and idealistic, but it is astonishing to find how much poetry and idealism there is among the men at the Front. I never visit a hospital ward without seeing in the weakness and wounds of our men the authentic touch of God. The wind of Calvary blows all around our hospitals, and the men who suffer there have trod a path that Christ knew. Is this too optimistic an estimate of the soldier's character ? Does it depict a spirituality that is largely non-existent ? If you expect the average soldier to speak the religious vocabulary you will be disappointed. But when a man opens up his heart to you, tells you of his fears and hopes, speaks of his

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home and what the separation from it means, talks of his longing for a sight of his little children, there is no questioning the sincerity and tenderness of his nature—the beauty of his spirit. That broken frame, that wounded limb, is very precious in the eyes of Christ. He looks down upon that shattered body in pity, and in a mystic yet real sense bestows His reward—the Decoration of the Cross.

The mind of the soldier also bears the *stigmata* of Christ. What an amount of new and original thinking is being done by our men ! Peace-time thoughts and ideas have been largely obliterated ; the man on active service thinks in a very different way. Sometimes we say, “ Doesn’t it seem a long time since war broke out ? ” That is not merely because three years have rolled by ; the time cannot be measured in terms of years. The explanation is that we have travelled from one world to another, from the world of easy-going selfishness and indifference into a world of stern reality and vivid living. Old ways of thinking have become old-fashioned ; everything has to be thought out afresh. When death walks

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beside life, life is a serious thing, and makes men thoughtful.

Very often one chooses as the Scripture lesson for a service at the Front the Twenty-third Psalm. In the careless days before the war that Psalm, with all its beauty and tenderness, probably meant very little to the young Englishman—he did not feel the need of it. But when shells are bursting not far away; when machine-guns are at their work with a nerve-racking regularity; when suffering and death are all around, then that Psalm of Life and Death is yours, yours, yours, and you cling to it with desperation. Men think differently out here, for they have much to think of that has not come within their ken before. For the first time in their lives they begin to think some of the thoughts of Jesus. They think of peace as He thought of it, as an infinitely precious thing. They think of home as He thought of it—as the sanctuary of life. They think of sacrifice as He thought of it—as a stern yet beautiful necessity. And they connect love with sacrifice as He connected them—“Greater love hath no man than this,

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that a man lay down his life for his friend." Truly the mind of the soldier bears the *stigmata* of Christ, the Decoration of the Cross.

To go yet deeper, the very soul of the soldier—his entire personality—bears at times the impress of the Cross. It has been said that the war does not make bad men good, but it may make good men better. That is a fair statement of the case. Some men are coarsened by the hard and unlovely conditions of military life ; others are chastened and purified by those same conditions. I remember addressing a number of men just before we went into the Somme Battle. Never have I seen so beautiful a sight—the faces of the men were different from what they had been before. Trouble had cast a shadow over them, it is true ; but it was more than that. The very soul looked out of the eyes, and the whole expression was one of spiritual beauty. When Christ set His face to go to Jerusalem, He walked forward with an exaltation about Him that all noted and feared ; the thought of the Cross transfused His personality. So it was

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that day with those lads of ours. They were going to their Calvary, and, in their measure, they too were transfigured by the thought of it. They received the Decoration of the Cross.

II

THE SURE COVERING OF GOD

THE battle-songs of the Old Testament are once again being sung. Hymns of war and strife, long unsung through years of peace, spring to our lips in the hour of battle. Whenever men have had to fight for freedom they have marched forth to war to the music of the sacred battle-songs. Cromwell's soldiers rushed into battle singing their favourite Psalms, and many a Scottish Covenanter, driven from hearth and home by a ruthless foe, faced the dark night and the dreary moorlands because his heart was singing some deathless song of the Lord's victory.

"Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle," is a line culled from one of these ancient battle-songs. The 140th Psalm is written by a man who is passing through all the experiences of war—its woe and sickening despair, its exhilaration and glory. The writer

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is a man of nervous temperament—one upon whom the strain of long-continued warfare is beginning to tell. Unconsciously he exaggerates the dangers, and his anger with the enemy becomes bitter and contemptuous: "As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them." It is, however, a tribute to the fine strength of his faith that it rises triumphant in his soul, dominating and subduing his angry, bloodthirsty passions. The cry for vengeance dies away, and in its place there rings out the note of perfect confidence in God. It is the confession of a soldier who fights not in his own strength: "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

The genuineness of this Psalm cannot be doubted, for, after long centuries, it rings true to the experiences of our own time. The fact of war alters little with the passing years. The weapons change; the battlefields are very different; the scale of military operations is infinitely enlarged; but war—the thing itself—is changeless. Man opposed to man; the strength of one nation thrown ruthlessly

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against the strength of another nation ; the privations and sufferings endured on the battlefield ; the toll of death—these things change not. The Psalmist was singing of a tribal war in Palestine—guerilla warfare of a most primitive type, but his song is our song. The passions that surged in his heart like a storm at sea ; the fears that made him tremble like an aspen leaf ; the hope that shone out as a gleam of light in the night ; the faith that sustained him through it all—these are also our experiences on the battlefields of Europe to-day.

A recent visit to a shattered French village near the line of battle made such thoughts as these very vivid. It had suffered sorely from the shock of war. Scarcely a house remained intact, and the village street, never a very beautiful thoroughfare, looked very dreary as I rode through it a few mornings ago. Our guns boomed out ; the enemy replied ; and the noise was terrific. But I had not come to investigate the conditions of modern warfare, or be thrilled by the sound and sight of our great cannon, hurling destruction into the

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enemy's lines. I came to seek men—to have a talk with some of our lads in khaki, and it was from them that I learnt anew the truths that I am trying to express. This is a great school for experimental religion, and if it does not turn out saints, it will produce men who believe in God and fear Him. Beneath the khaki tunics beat human hearts, and these hearts are singing their war-song, even as the Psalmist did. There is much true religion out here. Hands are clasped in prayer in the hour of danger. Passionate faith burns in many a soldier's breast, and a spirit of sacrifice, inspired by Christ Himself, sustains and ennobles thousands of our men. They go on with their heart-breaking task day by day, trusting that God will bring them through. If they expressed their faith, they would say, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

In what sense is that statement true? Does such a faith stand the test of actual experience? Dare a minister preach from such a text with the battlefield as his pulpit? Putting all theorising aside, can we say that the Psalmist

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was speaking the simple truth when he asserted that God can be a sure covering in the day of battle ? These questions whirled through my mind as I stood in that desolated village two or three days ago, face to face with the grim realities of modern warfare ; and I shall draw upon my experience among our men in seeking for an answer. If it were possible, I would unveil the soldier's heart, as seen in its response to the appeal of religion.

First, I think, the sure covering of God is being experienced by the soldier whose faith is grounded in the Divine love. It is astonishing to find how men cling to their belief in a good God whilst the world around them lies in destruction, and blind force seems to hold sway everywhere. Sometimes that faith receives a severe shock ; sometimes it staggers before some fresh, terrible fact, but it is not easily destroyed altogether. The mud-stained lad from the trenches, who has learnt of Christ in peaceful days, sticks to his faith with stubborn persistence. The average soldier does not want to hear sermons that reconcile with laboured argument war and Christianity. He

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either decided that question for himself when he enlisted, or else he concluded that the problem was beyond him. All that he cares for now is to know that God in His infinite love is close at hand. The message for the man who is going into the trenches to-morrow morning must be simple and true, warm and kindly. He wants something to hang on to, some vital thought to ponder through the dark night, some comforting truth that will warm his heart when his body is soaked in the wet mud. That beautiful picture entitled "The Great Sacrifice" never fails to bring the light to the soldier's eye. There is a truth there that he needs—a truth that may blossom in his own heart. He learns by such a faith to take his place in the battle-line with peace in his soul and this word upon his lips, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

Again, prayer is meaning a great deal to many of our men out here. Sometimes a man will speak of the deepest things in a heart-to-heart conversation, and he will tell you that when all else fails prayer is a source of power and comfort. By means of it he realises the sure

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covering of God. This testimony was given me by a man whose word could not be challenged: "It was the first night in the trenches, and, from the colonel down to the youngest lad in the battalion, all were praying." No cheap cynicism can lay sacrilegious hands upon such a glorious fact. No sly innuendo about the desperation of fear can annul that prayer-meeting in the trenches. To many of us the mere thought of it is very beautiful, very pathetic and very sacred. That men should turn instinctively to God in their hour of great need is an impressive testimony to the value of prayer. I do not think that they trouble about the philosophy of prayer, its inner workings and its mysterious power; but they know that it is right that a man's face should be turned to heaven and his heart reaching out towards God when human help avails not. It is the son's recognition of his Father—his acknowledgment that all things are in the Father's hand. A soldier at prayer! Amid the thunder of the guns and the din of the battlefield there is one place of perfect peace—that soldier's heart. How sure is his

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faith as he whispers, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

The sure covering of God is experienced by our soldiers in yet another way. So many of them came out here hating war with a great hatred. Nothing but a supreme sense of duty could have sent them into the army, and nothing but a supreme sense of duty could make them take their share in the shedding of blood on the battlefield. The consciousness that they are doing the right thing now floods their souls with light, and warmth, and peace. In the hour before dawn—the most trying hour in the trenches, when the cold is most intense and vitality at its lowest—some of them remember that, and smile.

Only yesterday I was shown a photograph which any man might be proud to possess—a family group consisting of the soldier himself, with his wife and bairns. I looked at it, and could not but see that it represented a family held together by strong, sure bonds of affection. "And why did you come out here?" I inquired. He smiled as he replied, "I simply could not help coming." I looked at

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his mud-stained clothes, his drawn face and tired eyes, and thought of the home life he had left behind him—all this for duty's sake ; and I knew that I stood on holy ground. He was serene and happy. He knew from experience what most of us know only in theory. He had found the shelter of which the Psalmist speaks.

Such is the sure covering of God, which so many of our men are experiencing as they take their place in the battle-line. By a faith that is too sincere not to be effective, by prayer which is too earnest not to be prevailing, and by a devotion to duty that is too fine to end in failure they find enduring peace and perfect happiness amid all the horrors of warfare. Fathers and mothers of England, lift up your heads ! These boys of yours are not to be pitied. They are making the great discovery. They are finding God, and the Psalmist's confession is upon their lips : "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

III

THE ETERNAL MAGNET

THERE is a word of hope written upon the heart of every soldier on active service—the word *England*. He thinks of England, talks of England, dreams of England, from the day he leaves her shores. When the hardships of war press upon him, his thoughts turn inevitably to the homeland, with all its happy, tender associations. When the weather is at its worst, when the trenches are muddiest, when every physical discomfort is accentuated, and death is almost to be preferred to life, the soldier warms his heart with thoughts of England. As in the trenches, so in the hospital ward. The wounded soldier hardly dares to hope that he will be sent to England, but if that magic word should fall from the lips of the medical officer he is soon strong enough for the journey! The doctor's decision is a tonic that supplies new energy, and "not all the king's horses and all the king's men" can keep

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back that wounded man—once he has received his passport for England. Again, the soldier who has successfully withstood the hardships of the battlefield, and has received ten days' leave, becomes a new man with the prospect of home before him. His personality takes on a fresh keenness, and his fellow-soldiers regard him with sympathetic interest. In one battalion, at least, a beautiful custom prevails in this connection. A man who is to go on leave is taken special care of on his last visit to the trenches before his departure. If possible, he is kept in the dug-out, away from the enemy's fire, "so that his mother may not be disappointed." This lovely custom, this guardianship of the man bound for England, is but another evidence of the passionate love for his country that burns in the heart of the British soldier. And if England has the place of honour in his waking thoughts, what shall we say of the dreams of the soldier on active service? I think of a bright-faced lad who said to me not long ago, "I dreamt I was at home in England last night, and when I woke and found I was still here——" There was no

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need for him to finish his sentence ; I knew all that was in his heart. The supreme passions in the soul of the British soldier are victory—and home. "England" is written upon every heart.

This love for home and country is playing a noble part in the moral and spiritual education of the British soldier. Any fine idealism is a saving grace, and the ties that bind him to old associations also keep him away from moral catastrophes. This passion for the homeland is as a great magnet, drawing men towards honour, piety, and unselfish love. I do not hesitate to say that the British Army is morally and spiritually exalted by the fierceness of its home-hunger. This is the eternal magnet from whose drawing power no soldier wishes to escape. It is the guarantee of our moral health, the preserver of our spiritual keenness. Home and country become dearer with the passing days, and there is not a soldier on active service who does not feel anew the passion that breathes through the lines that Scott penned long ago :

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
'This is my own, my native land.'"

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This attachment to home and country is illustrative of something that goes much deeper. Just as England is the indispensable magnet in the realm of sentiment in the army, drawing our men towards honour and unselfishness, so in the sphere of religion God is the Eternal Magnet, attracting our brave fellows to Himself by subtle but unquestionable spiritual forces. Religion would have a poor chance at the Front if it depended solely upon moral resolution. The deteriorating influences of military life would prove overwhelming, and the temptations that beset the soldier's path would not be successfully resisted. I can only explain the response to the religious appeal which is so often witnessed on the thesis that God is speaking to men's hearts and calling them to Himself; that He looks down upon the blood-stained battlefields of Europe with a specially tender pity; and that the Divine appeal of other days rings out to-day with fresh compassion: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The magnetism of God is being strongly felt by all sorts and conditions of men

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in the army—that magnetism of which Jesus spoke when He said, “No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him”; and it may be possible to indicate what it is in the Divine character that specially appeals to our war-worn soldiers.

First, the magnetism of the Divine Strength attracts the soldier and draws him to God. We are seeing a new beauty and experiencing a new comfort in the name of Almighty God. Probably for the first time the young manhood of England is realising the insufficiency of self-reliance. We have preached long enough the doctrine of self-help. It had become part of the national creed—an ingredient of the national character. Independence had been enthroned as queen of the virtues in the English code of morals, and efficiency was the watchword with which every young man entered upon his life's work. But this doctrine is not good enough for the soldier on the field of battle. That he will play his part manfully we may take for granted; but the gospel of self-help will break down at the most critical point. In the hour of danger the soldier

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realises that he needs a strength and protection that come not from man. A vision of Almighty God alone can give him peace. With a cry of joy, the sorely-tried warrior leaves all to God. "I am doing my best, and am content to leave the issue with Him," is the religious expression of the fatalistic belief so common at the Front : "The bullet that gets you has your number on it !" The human need is great in the extreme, and the magnet of the Divine Omnipotence attracts many hearts. The word of St. John is very true : "No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him."

The magnetism of the Divine Holiness has also a surprisingly powerful influence over many minds. The highest ideals are endowed with a new attractiveness for men whose eyes have become weary of the grim spectacle of warfare. It may be that war has a coarsening effect upon some natures, blunting the finer feelings and lowering all spiritual aspirations. That may be so, but it is my firm hope that the very awfulness of this struggle will arouse the best in a man's nature, all his right feelings rising up against the cruelty of modern warfare.

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The ideals of peace, for instance, will have no more passionate advocates than the men who are spared to come back from the war. There will be no regret that they fought in this war ; they will be proud of that to the end of their days. But our men will come back, hating war with a great hatred. A new peace movement, embracing the entire young manhood of the Empire, will arise—a movement so strong and sane, so determined and enthusiastic, as to make another war impossible in our generation. The same thing will happen in the other countries engaged in this struggle, and the next Peace Conference will have behind it the young manhood of Europe. God has a wonderful way of bringing good out of evil. Europe would not believe in the ideals of peace in peaceful days, but now, after three and a half years of war, we are drawn to them by a power we cannot resist. God is holding out His arms to us, and we are glad ; for “ no man cometh unto Me, except the Father draw him.”

But the supreme instance of the magnetism of God in the lives of our men at the Front is not to be found in His Strength nor in His

The Eternal Magnet

Holiness, but in His Love. To preach the love of God as revealed in the death of Jesus Christ is always the duty of the Christian minister ; to omit to preach it to the men in the battle-line would be a betrayal of the truth, an insult to Christ, a crime against God Himself. Ah ! how faithless we had become in recent years ! We thought that the Gospel had lost its charm—that its music had no delight for the ears of the younger generation. In a desperation truly pathetic we talked a great deal about “ re-stating the truth in terms of modern thought.” That is a laudable ambition—a thing that must be done. But that did not touch the heart of the trouble—our lost sense of God. Now, upon the battle-fields of Europe, God has spoken again in the burning language of love, and the men who need that love so much are responding to its appeal. Our new religious teachers may very well be the men who come back from the war, testifying to God’s grace in every hour of need, our new prophets, those lads of ours, who upon many a field of battle have had their vision of the Crucified Lord.

IV

THE JOY OF THE WOUNDED

THE most striking feature of a military hospital ward is the cheerfulness of the patients. The atmosphere is buoyant with hope and good fellowship. Men who a few days before were well and strong, but now lie helpless, show few signs of depression or despair. As the chaplain passes from bed to bed he is greeted with happy smiles and brave words. The wounded heroes are wonderfully bright and alert. Often they are ready to talk, and their conversation is full of zest and joyousness. Even when the injury is of a very serious nature and may mean permanent disablement, regret is swallowed up in cheerfulness; the incapacitated soldier is not easily daunted.

The joy of the wounded—what does it mean? I have seen the thing and marvelled about it so often that I am constrained to seek for an explanation. Why should that young fellow, wounded and maimed in the last battle and now

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lying helpless on a hospital bed, seem so serene and happy ? What is the mystery of the gladness in his eyes ? Why should that veteran—a man who has seen service both in the Soudan and South Africa—speak so cheerfully as you talk to him about his wound and a thousand other things ? Is there a simple explanation of this mysterious happiness that thrills through our hospital wards, or must one probe the depths of the human heart before discovering the secret ?

One explanation of the joy of the wounded is that it is largely relief and thankfulness at getting out of the struggle alive. Trench life can become a very grim and terrible experience. The discomfort, the dirt, the cold, the strain, the constant sense of danger—these things endured month after month with but short intervals of rest—try the nerves of the strongest, and at last there is one desire, and only one, in the heart of the soldier—to be out of it ! What would he not give to know that these terrible days and nights in the trenches were at an end ! How inexpressibly glad he would be to hear that the ordeal was over ! To be

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out of it—that would be heaven! Do not imagine that there is any lack of courage in such a desire—in spite of weariness the soldier will fight on with grim determination. But when a wound lays him helpless and he can honourably exchange the muddy trench for a comfortable hospital bed, can he be blamed for breathing a sigh of relief? Who is going to call such a feeling unworthy? Let that censorious critic watch our lads coming out of the trenches, footsore and weary, and he will withhold his censure. The happiness of our wounded soldiers may be partially explained by the fact that war and its grim realities have been laid aside for a time.

But that explanation does not contain the whole truth, and we shall be getting nearer to the heart of the matter when we see that the joy of the wounded really rests on a spiritual basis: a consciousness of duty faithfully accomplished makes for happiness. The soldier's wound is a token of honour—a sign to all the world that the man was not found wanting. Every wounded man is secretly proud of his wound. He will not talk much

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about it—that is not the English way. British reserve does not break down when a man crosses the Channel to France or Flanders. But for all that he regards his wound as a decoration of honour—a soldier's letters patent.

But the joy of the wounded has a deeper explanation still. I first heard it from the lips of a soldier who was also a great student of human nature, and particularly of human nature in the army. He had made a speciality of the soldier's heart. I asked him why the wounded fighter should be so well content with his lot. What was the meaning of that curious happiness that is so often to be met with in the hospital ward? His reply was, "Every soldier knows that this war is a crime against God and humanity, and when he falls wounded on the battlefield he is dimly conscious that he is bearing in his own body a part of the suffering for that sin; and he is glad to do so." The same truth was more bluntly expressed by another of our men, who said, "What a lot of innocent folk have to suffer for this wrong."

Instantly there flashed across the mind the

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matchless words of the prophet Isaiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions." The principle of vicarious suffering is universal in its expression, and I discover it in one of its finest forms in the military hospital. It is a solemn and beautiful thought that these wounded and maimed soldiers have a close affinity with Jesus. Their point of contact with Him is their willingness to suffer for others—their joy in such a sacrifice. Their nearness to the crucified Lord may be largely unconscious—and perhaps all the more impressive on that account. Unaccustomed to meditating on theological or religious themes, they do not know that they are exemplifying the great doctrine of vicarious suffering. Yet they dimly realise that their wounds have a value and office that does not belong to a mere accident; they detect the radical difference between being knocked down by a motor-car and being wounded by a German bullet. The former belongs to the category of regrettable things—there is no spiritual mystery about it. But to receive a bullet wound willingly and almost gladly; to go out from home and

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country eager to take all risks ; to count life itself a small thing that a larger good may be won—that is something very different. In the long night watches when sleep will not come, through lonely hours when pain is the only companion, our men ponder these matters, and from them reap a deep content—an undeniable joy. They have discovered the blessedness of vicarious suffering.

“All roads lead to Rome,” and every meditation upon life’s deepest things leads to Christ. “He was wounded for our transgressions,” wrote Isaiah, speaking perhaps of a suffering servant of his day, but also of Him who was to come. The prophetic accent cannot be mistaken, and after Jesus had lived and died men discovered His biography in the ancient Scriptures. The Cross appeared at last in a sudden splendour before the eyes of men, but seers of days long past had had their dim and fitful visions of Calvary. The principle of vicarious suffering played a noble part in pre-Christian times, but Jesus was its full and perfect exponent ; in Him Love lived. The truth that Christ died for others has often been over-

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clouded with misunderstandings, or denied altogether as unjust and therefore unethical. We find it hard to believe in the Atonement in any full and satisfying sense. Baffled by the mystery of it, we have watered it down into some vague spiritual influence that exercises an uplifting ministry upon the souls of men.

May we not contend that the war, with its amazing revelation of the capacity for suffering that has lain buried in the human heart, will lead us to understand the Cross of Christ? When we remember what has happened in so many homes—the son of the house, pride of his father's eye, darling of his mother's heart, dying the soldier's death for no sin of theirs or his—will not that sacrifice lead us to a new appreciation, a more intimate understanding, of the sacrifice on Calvary? Our tears will blind our eyes no more, but rather cleanse them for clearer sight. Those boys have not died in vain; from every lonely soldier's grave in France I can see Calvary. In peaceful days when all our ways were prosperous we could not understand the Death of the Cross; we thought of it chiefly as a theme for theological

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discussion. We understood Jesus only in part. We appreciated the Jesus of Galilee's lanes and fields, the gladsome Prophet of the lakeside. We bowed in reverence before the Sermon on the Mount with its austere moral ideal. Jesus, the Teacher, found us eager pupils. We loved Him also for His gentle, sympathetic nature—His willingness to heal and help. We followed Him along all the obviously beautiful paths of His life, but when He entered Gethsemane we stumbled. The hour of the Passion was hard to understand. The crown of thorns seemed a meaningless outrage. To us, even as to the Jews, the Cross was a stumbling-block.

Now all is different. We have agonised in our Gethsemane, and we begin to understand what His Passion meant. The crown of thorns has touched our forehead, and His crown begins to shine in its beauty. The cross of suffering has been laid upon our shoulders, and we know that His Cross is our only hope. Those who are dearest to us have been wounded for our sakes, and every scar upon their bodies speaks of those greater wounds that are for the healing

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of the nations. Behind our long battle-line in France are the Red Cross hospitals, and whenever I enter them I know that I stand on holy ground. Every wounded soldier points my thoughts upward to Him who bore the wounds of humanity uncomplainingly and gladly. When I kneel by the dying and whisper the story of Christ's love, this word never comes amiss, "*He* was wounded for our transgressions." The light of a great joy shines forth from eyes that soon will close in sleep; and the face of a British soldier becomes as the face of an angel.

V

THE CHRIST OF THE BATTLEFIELD

A HURRIED visit to London from the Front was made memorable for me by a conversation. My friend is a man who thinks long and deeply on the great questions of the spirit, and he put this query: What sort of a Gospel attracts and wins our fighting men? In what way does Jesus appeal to their admiration and love? Can you describe the Christ of the battlefield—the Christ that captures the soldier's heart?

My friend's question opens up a large field of inquiry, but none can deny how momentous the answer must be. It is of infinite importance to the development of religious life in England after the war that we should know what the soldier who has passed through the war thinks and believes about Jesus Christ. It has to be remembered that the manhood of England from youth to early middle age is now immersed in the war, and if the Church

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fails to win and hold this war-experienced generation, it will have lost one of its very greatest opportunities. On the other hand, if the appeal of the Church is so broad and deep, so strong and tender, so true and reasonable as to draw to itself the men who come back from the war, who can put bounds to its possibilities, or say what glorious triumphs it may not achieve? The years immediately following the war will be critical for Christianity in England—indeed all the world over. We must brace ourselves for the struggle; we must examine anew the weapons of our warfare; we must do everything we can to ensure victory. All sorts of questions must be searchingly asked and unflinchingly faced: Is our theology good enough—adequate to all human need, true in thought and experience? Are our Church methods all they ought to be—do they appeal to men? Is the spirit and atmosphere of the Church warm and brotherly? Have we a large enough programme? Do we challenge the best that is in a man? Is it worth a strong man's while to work for Christ and the Church?

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No doubt these and other problems suggested the question: What sort of a Christ appeals to the men at the Front? One can go back in memory over many months of work, and it is possible to co-ordinate very varied experiences. Services have been held under all sorts of conditions, and—what is more important—one has listened to men of every kind and class, as they have been induced to open their minds and hearts. And from this strange medley of experience it is possible to draw forth certain broad conclusions. Here, for instance, is one exhilarating fact: the men love to hear about Christ. An address that has no word of Jesus in it fails to arouse interest or enthusiasm. A story is told concerning a rough, careless fellow, whose language was more often than not unsuitable for a drawing-room. One Sunday morning he went to Church parade, at which a sermon was preached on playing the game. It was a fine, manly address, the kind of thing that might appeal to such a man as this, one would think. But afterwards he offered this opinion: "That sort of sermon may be all right in its way, but

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where is the help for such chaps as us ? What we want is the Gospel—something about Christ.” That is the feeling of most of our men. An ethical code, divorced from a gospel of forgiving love, is not sufficient for the needs of sinful, hard-pressed, danger-ridden men. “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel !” cried St. Paul in a moment of revelation, and that cry of the heart is echoed and re-echoed by every chaplain in the army. The man on the battlefield has one religious need—Christ ; and the watchword of the Church in coming days must be—Christ.

But it matters very much what sort of a Christ is preached, and I can best express my first point by saying that the men want a manly Christ. It is a truism to say that Christianity has been misrepresented at the hands of its representatives, and in no respect more than in the orthodox portrayal of the Jesus of the Gospels. Pious sentiment is at a discount at the Front, but a thoughtful and fair examination of the character of Jesus, a demonstration of His essential greatness, a plea for sympathetic consideration of His

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moral grandeur, a disclosure of His nobility of soul, always tell with an audience of soldiers. They will bow before a Christ Who commands their respect and reverence, and possesses those qualities of manhood they most admire and desire for themselves. Here lies our great opportunity now, and immediately after the war. We know that Christ is the supreme example of manhood. Whether one speaks about some incident in the life of Jesus, or seeks to unfold some word that He spoke, the essential nobility of His character shines out, and that glimpse of moral grandeur fascinates a man and compels his obedience. The task of the Church after the war will be along these lines—to unfold the character of Christ as the ideal for every man. It must be shown that everything we admire in a man's character—truthfulness, sincerity, strength, broadmindedness, sympathy—are all found in their perfection in Jesus. Hero-worship is always a strong factor in the consciousness of youth. Jesus must be enthroned in the imagination of the young manhood of the world as the Man of all men.

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The Christ of the battlefield is also a man who has been tempted, and knows the conditions of human life. Few subjects have such an attraction for our men as that of temptation, and they listen eagerly as you show how Christ shared that experience. If the story of the Temptation in the Wilderness were cut out of the Bible, a young man's conception of Christ would be seriously marred. The knowledge that He met the full blast of temptation and never flinched ; felt the keen agony of temptation and never murmured ; experienced the insidious pleadings of temptation and never faltered—all this is an inspiration to young men who find temptation to be such a power in their lives ; it gives them a link of sympathy with the Perfect One.

Have we not been too prone to pour shame and scorn upon temptation ? Have we not confused sin with temptation, regarding them as almost equally evil ? "He was tempted in all points like as we are," and if we point the finger of derision at temptation, we point the finger of derision at Christ. It is not a shameful thing to be tempted ; the shame is in yield-

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ing. Temptation should be spoken of more openly and naturally in the pulpit; wise and helpful teaching on the best way of overcoming it should have a larger place in our sermons. We still divide men into two great classes: saints and sinners, ignoring the truth that all men have the possibilities of both within them, and are as a matter of fact an amalgam of both. This is certainly the case at the Front. Fearless in face of the enemy, stern in his sense of duty, generous to the point of sacrifice in helping a chum, a man will yet give way to all sorts of temptations.* We must recognise the dual nature in man—his soarings toward heaven, his declensions toward hell. Temptation, a great undoubted fact in all our lives, must be recognised more frankly, and all the wisdom and sympathy we have enlisted in the struggle to overcome it. The comradeship of temptation is a great power, and when we can create the atmosphere of mutual helpfulness against the common foe, victory is almost assured. Christ, tempted like as we are, yet without sin, appeals to the soldier, and strengthens his desire to be like Him.

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Is such a Christ enough? Does Jesus, viewed as a man of ideal character though subjected to our temptations, suffice for the needs of the soldier? It might be thought that the character and sympathy of Jesus would be all-sufficient for the man upon the field of battle, but it is not so. Nowhere in all the world is the Christ of the Cross more needed than on the plains of France and Flanders. Forgiveness of sin is a clamant need there. The man who takes his place in the trenches, or advances upon the enemy, wants the assurance that his past is forgiven, if he has any religious craving at all. Nothing but a Saviour who has died that we may be forgiven can bring peace to the heart in the hour of battle. If you tell a soldier that the self-sacrifice involved in fighting makes him acceptable unto God, he may smile and thank you for the comfort you would fain give him; but dimly he knows that there is a flaw, somewhere, in that kind of reasoning. On the other hand, speak of the love of Christ revealed on Calvary; tell him, in language as simple as you can, that he can find pardon for his sins

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there, and you have done all you can do, all you need do. When the spiritual history of the Great War comes to be written, the substance of it will be this—our men found the peace and joy of God through a simple steady faith in the redemption wrought by Christ ; they found it there—or not at all.

Observe that I am not pleading for any special doctrine of the Atonement. I understand it too meagrely on its intellectual side to do that. My point is that tragedy at its darkest, sorrow at its keenest, failure at its worst can only be met by Christ, Who, dying, touched depths of sorrow and tragedy undreamed of by us. Imagine a soldier who is waiting to take part in an advance. The possibility that a few hours later he may die comes up before him. Steadily, seriously, he looks that fact in the face. He is not afraid—he will go where duty calls, calmly enough. But there is a tumult, a restlessness in his heart all the same. What is the cause of it ? It is partly the fierce love of life asserting itself, an involuntary shrinking from the blow that may end it. But beneath those natural emo-

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tions is another feeling—just this : Death is a summons into the presence of Truth, a call to stand in the light of the Divine Spirit. Am I ready for that ? the soldier asks himself in pathetic simplicity. His poor, broken record answers, No. How, then, can he be ready ? There is no time to redeem the past by a new life of goodness. Only one thing can he do—cry for pardon and peace through Christ, groping his way unerringly to the Cross. And that is what he does.

VI

CARRY ON !

"CARRY ON !" These two words express the very soul of military success. They stand for all those qualities that are so conspicuous in our fighting forces — determination, perseverance, energy, and courage. Every day this order is repeatedly given in every unit in the British Army. From the very commencement of the war, when our first hundred thousand men landed in France, and by a miracle stayed the German advance, until the present time, when our armies on the Western Front are such a vast host, all our operations have been conducted in the spirit of this command. No man can be a day on active service without coming under the spell of this short but all-comprehensive dictum. The supreme duty of the soldier is to keep on doing his best—to exercise an unbroken and unbreakable determination to obey whatever commands may be issued. "Theirs not to reason why." There

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is no place for argument in military life. Every man—whether private or officer—must learn to execute all orders. To achieve this end no effort is too great, no sacrifice too heavy. The British soldier has learnt the inner meaning of this imperative injunction, and in his best moments glories in it. He knows that success in warfare depends upon instant obedience to its call, and he intends to do his part in honouring it both in the letter and in the spirit. The word “impossible” is foreign to the military vocabulary and must never pass the lips of any soldier. If an order has been given, if a duty has been assigned, if a military operation has been decided upon, nothing must prevent its accomplishment. None dares to say that the task is hopeless; it may be hopeless, but there is only one thing to do—attempt it! Implicit obedience of this sort is second nature to the true soldier. Always, everywhere, and under all circumstances, there is no alternative open to him—he must *carry on*.

The command applies in small and great matters alike. A sergeant drilling raw recruits

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may be told to carry on until a certain hour, and although he may have to put his unfortunate platoon through the same movements a hundred times he will do that rather than fail to obey orders. A transport officer may be commanded to bring supplies through to a certain point, and although the night be black as ink and the roads flooded, he will exert every nerve, and despise rest and sleep until his waggons reach their destination. A battalion may be ordered to take a line of trenches, and, according to the military spirit, those trenches must be taken or every man give his life in the attempt. A general may be enjoined to conduct a great advance, and he must regard that injunction as imperative as a private regards a simple order—he must not fail. The army lives and moves and has its being in an atmosphere of absolute obedience. It is not ours to command success. The order given may not be within the power of mortals to achieve, but the attempt to obey it must be made and must never slacken. Every man who wears khaki is under the spell of the command—"Carry on !"

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Around these words there have gathered tender and beautiful associations for a number of men in a fighting unit who gathered together for prayer one Saturday evening. One of these lads was leading us in prayer, and amid many halting petitions there came this cry of the heart, fervent in its utterance and luminous with spiritual truth, "Lord, help us to obey Thy command, *Carry on till I come.*" Only a touch of spiritual genius could have suggested that almost perfect paraphrase. The servants in the Parable of the Pounds were told by their Lord, "Occupy till I come." This British soldier saw the inner meaning of that order—a command to exercise a tireless energy in the absence of their Master. These servants might be at their wits' end to know how to use the money to best advantage, but though everything be against them they must persevere. The command, "Occupy till I come," rang in their ears when hopelessness and despair gripped their hearts, and they shook off despondency and renewed their efforts in the inspiration of that clear call. The soldier recognised in that situation a parable of his own life, and he

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knew that the ancient command is still regnant. It seemed very modern and vital when he gave it a translation that brought it home to men who are living under military discipline. The phrase that we had heard daily for months past, and not always gladly, was suddenly lifted into an ampler, more gracious region. It became invested with spiritual meaning and with an authority that is of God. It is more than a military formula now ; it is a Divine law. Christ's lips sanctify all words, and when He breathes the familiar command we regard obedience to it as the supreme necessity. "Carry on till I come," cries our Lord, and the Divine injunction seals our lives to endless effort in His service.

In these difficult days, when the sorrows of the world are so many and so bitter, this Divine call comes with peculiar appropriateness. We all require to be reminded of the holy duty of perseverance, and I shall try to indicate where Christ's command is specially needed. The temptation to give up the struggle and yield to a base despair may be felt in many quarters, but the temptation

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must be resisted and overcome if our Lord's challenging summons is to be obeyed. His voice is to be heard both at home and abroad, calling men to endless perseverance in the great cause. Let us listen to that voice, and note the possibilities that lie in obedience to it.

First of all, Christ's command rings through the council chambers of the nation, summoning our statesmen to face their terrific tasks with dauntless perseverance. We know as a people that we are staking all upon the great prize of spiritual liberty, and if our leaders conceive their undertaking as a Divine commission, if they say that they have heard Christ's austere command, "Carry on till I come," millions of men and women will hail such a declaration with gratitude. We want to catch the prophetic notes in the speeches of our statesmen; we want to be assured that they never cease to regard this struggle as a holy crusade. Is it not possible to recapture the early glow that pervaded all our political endeavours in the first days of the war? May we not reasonably hope that party passion should cease to threaten the unity of the nation? Are we

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looking for too much when we ask that the fine seriousness that pervades the army at the Front should also be the temper of the House of Commons ? I fear that some of the debates in Parliament make strange reading for the men in the trenches. Those who are facing death daily for England's sake cannot understand how the country's affairs can be discussed except with a burning desire to forward her highest interests. Levity, petty ambition, party passion, dilatory tactics—these things are incomprehensible to war-worn soldiers who are perhaps too dull to appreciate the Parliamentary game. Our political temper requires to be exalted, our political aims to be made more serious, and our political activities more strenuous and concentrated. There must be no faint-heartedness and no disastrous delays. Let urgency and thoroughness mark all our national doings, and let all our statesmen bend their whole strength to the achievement of victory.

Christ's summons to carry on is heard also amongst the men who are fighting our battles by land and sea. It is the watchword to which

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many a sailor gives his allegiance anew in the silent vigil of the night ; it is the pledge which many a soldier takes as he faces the trenches once more. The sense of religious duty is the one thing that redeems warfare from barbarity. If a glow of happiness ever suffuses the soldier who fights, it is not because he loves war, but because he is urged forward by the call of duty. Some of our men are discovering the depths of the comfort of Christ. Many of them had led free, happy, untroubled lives previous to their experiences in this war, and when they are suddenly plunged into dark and dreadful places, it may be their joy to find that Christ is equal to their need—underneath are the Everlasting Arms. When that experience of the Divine Presence is real and living, the Divine command to persevere becomes transformed into a great privilege. A man will not fail Christ when he knows that Christ is doing everything for him. The Lord's command is always accompanied by the Lord's love ; and love softens the hardest duty and sweetens the bitterest experience. " Carry on till I come " is the word of Jesus, and I can bear testimony

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that that word has been heard in many a trench in France by lads who were near to despair, but recovered courage at the summons.

The Divine command will be uttered with a special tenderness to another company of people. It will be heard in those shadowed homes that have given their sons in the supreme sacrifice. There is nothing more sacred on this earth than a broken heart, and the love of Christ will not fail to give shelter. But there will be something more than tenderness in Christ's treatment of the sufferers. To them will come the summons to take up the duty nearest at hand, to resume the task of life, in spite of its broken hopes and shattered joys. A mother who has lost two sons in the war wrote, "I am honoured among women, for I have been called upon to give my all in the great cause," and she will live out her life in the inspiration of that thought. It may seem a hard doctrine to preach—that the broken heart has its duties as well as its consolations—but in reality it is the kindest of all doctrines. The way of healing will come through service. To surrender in face of the

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storm of grief; to lay aside life's burden because life's joy has been taken away; to forsake the high pilgrimage because beloved faces no longer make the way bright and cheerful—that is not Christ's purpose for the sorrowful and bereaved. Oh! sad and weary hearts, you who have buried your hopes in a soldier's lonely grave, what does the future hold for you? You may answer, despairingly, that there is no future for the heart that is broken. But stay! Christ's summons rings out firmly, but with infinite solicitude: "Carry on till I come!"

VII

THE CROSS STILL STANDS !

MANY a church in France and Flanders has suffered from the shock of war. Stately and beautiful cathedrals in the towns, ancient churches in the villages, and wayside shrines innumerable have been brought to ruin. Their splendour has been marred, their usefulness destroyed, and only sacred memories remain in the hearts of those who worshipped there. In some cases hardly one stone remains upon another—so wholesale has been the destruction. The devastation could scarcely be more complete, and yet there is one remarkable feature that has been noticed countless times by those who have troubled to observe—even when a church has been terribly wrecked, it often happens that the crucifix remains intact, as though some mysterious power guarded it from all harm. Shell-fire may have broken down walls and roof, pulpit and altar—almost the entire building—but the Cross remains

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untouched. Whilst the shock of war has spared so little, it has not brought the Cross to the ground. Whatever falls, the Cross still stands. This strange thing have I seen with my own eyes. One Sunday evening a band of soldiers gathered together for worship in an old church that had suffered badly from shell-fire. There was a great rent in the roof; the walls were broken and burnt; the altar was destroyed; and much *débris* was to be seen on all sides. After the service, a young fellow whose earnest, intelligent face I had noticed in the congregation came up, and, looking with shining eyes at the Cross, untouched by any violence, said, "Is it not wonderful how often that happens? It would seem that the Cross cannot be harmed." No mysterious explanation may be required. It may be merely a coincidence that the Cross so often remains untouched—and doubtless in many cases it has suffered in the general devastation.

But surely the unbroken Cross is symbolic of much — the outward and visible sign of a great spiritual truth. John Oxenham has given poetic expression to it in some

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beautiful verses: a line or two may be quoted:—

“His church a blackened ruin, scarce one stone
Left on another—yet untouched alone—
The Cross still stands.”

Whoever thinks upon the facts of life, seeking to read their meaning in the light of spiritual truth, will pause to inquire what is the inner meaning of these things. The truth proclaimed by the untouched Cross wherever it is found along the far-flung battle-line is this—amid the ruins of many of our hopes, amid the fall of many of our faiths, amid the destruction of many of our most cherished theories and passionate beliefs, there is one hope, one faith that cannot be destroyed—our hope and faith in the crucified Christ. The Cross is the supreme and final expression of the Divine love, the full revelation of the Father's heart, the perfect epitome of the Eternal Sacrifice; and, wherever in this war-ridden land the Cross stands in lonely perfection, unbroken and untouched amid the wreck of all earthly things, there is the parable of Divine love. History, reason, Scripture, conscience

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—all these trustworthy witnesses support the truth here symbolised. Christ in His sacrificial love is the one fact on which man can ever rely. Whatever mountains may be removed, Calvary's Hill abides for ever. Whatever landmarks of the world's progress may be obliterated, the Cross still stands.

How can we explain the enduring power of the Cross—its indestructibility amid such widespread destruction? The very shape and form of the Cross suggests some reasons why it is permanent. It reaches downward, outward and upward. It goes so far down as to reach the deepest grief of the soul; it stretches so far out as to bring within its sway all mankind; it goes so far up as to rest on the heart of God, drawing humanity into closest relationship with Him. Let us explore this far-reaching influence of the Cross of Christ, and discover therein the reason of its everlasting stability; for it is a needed truth in these days of rapid change and swift destruction.

The Cross will remain untouched and unbroken amid the wreckage of this war because it goes below every grief and is the balm for

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every wound. Never perhaps has the world known such sorrow as it knows to-day. Tears flow like a river. Countless homes are overshadowed. Despair is everywhere, and, for many, hope is no longer possible. In such a world as this—a world of tears and agony, there is this consolation—Christ knew something more terrible still. The physical sufferings of our Lord are not the last word on the subject of His pain. It was the burden of the world's sin upon His heart, the spiritual travail of a Saviour who realised the magnitude of His task, that constituted Christ's supreme suffering. Whatever our sorrows, there can be nothing equal to that. He drained the cup that we have but lifted to our lips. He shed tears more bitter than any of ours, and for that reason He can wipe the tears from off all faces. St. Paul speaks about the fellowship of His sufferings, but there is the converse experience—His fellowship in our sufferings. There is no value in a sympathy that is not founded on a common experience, and Christ's sympathy springs from His knowledge of human sorrows. This war is forging new links of sympathy

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between Christ and man. Many of us did not know what it meant to suffer before August, 1914. Life had dealt so kindly with us, and we never believed that its free joyousness could be threatened or destroyed. Then came the war with its long train of suffering. Homes were broken up, and for the first time an unnameable loneliness settled on many hearts. For youth there were the hardships of the field of battle, the sufferings of wounds, the fear of approaching death; for others there was the almost greater hardship of watching the scene from afar, hoping, fearing, sorrowing. These sufferings still continue, and we ask, Where is there comfort and healing for this world of sorrowful men and women? Now it is that we are discovering the mysterious power of the Cross. It stands the test in the crucible of present experience—it meets the grief and soothes the sorrows of the world to-day. Never was its place and power in human life so sure. Whatever be overturned in the universal upheaval of these times, the Cross still stands.

It is not only the downward reach of the

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Cross that assures its permanence ; it reaches outward also, overshadowing all men and drawing them into brotherhood and love. One has to lament the fact that war brings into deadly conflict men of different nations, but despite the separating influences of war there is a process of reconciliation going forward in the hearts of men, and a closer brotherhood, a more intimate fellowship is springing up amongst our own soldiers. Never has the young manhood of the Empire been brought into closer proximity, and this comingling of all sorts and conditions of men will have its influence upon the future. Towards this new understanding and closer co-operation the Cross of Christ contributes not a little. When men remember that they are the children of one Father, and redeemed by one Saviour, they realise afresh the claims of brotherhood. In the hour of danger that fellowship becomes very strong and unselfish. Two soldiers—an officer and a private—lay badly wounded on the battlefield of the Somme. Their common need drew them together, but in their weakness neither could render much help to the

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other. They forgot the difference of rank and only remembered they were brothers. They could scarcely move—so severe were their wounds—but they were able to clasp hands in mutual sympathy. The end drew near for both of them, and the man died first. A little later the officer was found, stroking the other's hand, now cold in death ; then he died himself. That incident, surely one of the most pathetic in all the annals of war, suggests to me the supreme office of the Cross—to draw men into real brotherhood—into a fellowship that death even cannot destroy. When the love of Christ succeeds in having its way in our hearts, the brotherhood of man will be an accomplished fact.

The most significant thing about the Cross is its relationship to the Father : it goes so far up as to rest on the heart of God. This would be a terrible world to live in if it consisted merely of humanity in its confusion and woe. The conception of mankind left to his own resources would drive us to despair ; we cling to the truth that we are the children of God, and that a Father's love and pity are

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over us. The lonely and hard-pressed soldier in France finds peace and comfort in this thought ; it helps him to live when life is hard and toilsome ; it helps him to die when the call comes. He dies, not perhaps in the full and glorious faith of a man who has long known and followed Christ, but at least with a faith that feels after God, a faith that clings blindly to the love that will not let him go.

What kind of a welcome does God give to this groping child of His ? What words of tenderness and love will fall from the Divine lips ? It is not hard to answer when we remember that the Cross of Christ is upon the heart of God. Christ's love is God's love, and Christ's welcome God's welcome—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

VIII

WOMEN AND THE WAR

THE war has witnessed a remarkable revival of social service among women. From August, 1914, until the present hour the women of England have been busier than they have ever been before in thinking of others and working for them. It would be impossible to compute the amount of service that has been rendered. When the men went to camp and battlefield, the women at home did not remain idle, but set themselves the task of doing what they could to ameliorate the hard conditions of active service. Almost every home became the scene of intense activity. Comforts of all kinds were sent out to the troops at the Front—a service still continued, even with increasing zeal, after three years of warfare. Hundreds of hospitals are staffed by women who had never previously felt called upon to minister to the sick. These women and girls, many of whom had lived lives of leisure and ease, heard

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the clamant appeal, and were willing to do any kind of work—however menial—if they might help to tend our wounded soldiers. With fine enthusiasm they threw themselves into their work, and it is in no small measure due to them that our medical service has proved so efficient. Others undertook work just as necessary. When the need of labourers on the land was made known, many women took the places of the men who had gone to the war, and toiled in the fields as earnestly and effectively as any workman. Our munition factories bear testimony to the same thing, and there is hardly a form of industry in England to-day that does not number women among its workpeople. It is evident that the heart of the English woman has been touched as never before.

Many women have not been content with service in the homeland, but have sought to share the hardships and privations of active service. Not only are the Base hospitals staffed by women, who are willing to be cut off from England that they may serve the sons of England, but further up the country and nearer to the battle-line many of them have gone,

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and it has to be recorded with pride, that some of these sisters have been wounded at the post of duty. Others, greatly daring, have become drivers of ambulance cars, and assist in conveying the wounded to hospital along the rough, dark roads of Northern France. A whole book might be written about the distinctively social service that is being rendered by women in the numerous canteens. There is a canteen at a railway station far up the country, and not far from the scene of active operations. It was started by an English girl for the benefit of the French Army, and for many months it was a centre of light and good cheer for the soldiers of France, who deeply appreciated such practical kindness. Later, that area was taken over by the British, and during the Somme Offensive more than a thousand of our men were daily given food and drink on their way up to the ordeal of the battlefield. That English girl came out to that bleak, wayside station that she might do what she could for the fighting hosts of France and England. For long months she toiled and still toils at her task, grudging nothing that she may make life a

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little easier for those who go into battle. Day and night the canteen is open, and its welcome never fails. A long troop train enters the station, and presently our men, cold and hungry, are flocking into the canteen. They are served, not in the brusque, professional manner, but graciously ; and they go out on their march into the night, conscious that they have come in contact with a gracious and compassionate personality.

I am asking myself : What does it all mean ? What is the significance of that vast amount of social service rendered by the women of Britain since the war began ? Is it a passing phase ? Has the dire necessity of the hour called forth this work, or does it mean more than that—a fresh departure in English life ? Has it any definite bearing upon the future development of woman's place in society ? Does it spell success for her struggles toward emancipation, her entrance into a larger and finer liberty ?

It is to be noticed that this larger place in the world—the vote and all that follows from it—has been obtained, not by the demands of

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women, but by the service of women. Those women who were trying to obtain the franchise during the last decade, by means that were often violent and lawless, would probably not have succeeded in their aims by those methods alone. A great demonstration in Hyde Park, spirited speeches in which the justice of their cause was ably advocated, persistent canvassing of the community—these methods of enlightenment may have prepared the way to success; but the simple fact stands out in steady light—England was not won over by this propaganda; something else, some stronger advocacy, some more cogent appeal was needed. The war gave women their great opportunity, and national service became their watchword. The struggle has brought man and woman into a common service as never before in human history. Woman has vindicated her right to be regarded as essential to the efficient government of the country. She has been saying less and less about her rights during this world-war, and more and more about her duties; and, in spite of that—nay, because of that—her rights are being more and

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more recognised. Her path to victory was the path of service—her way to freedom the way of sacrifice. History repeats itself, and once more do we see that there can be no new life, power and liberty without a willingness to give up all. "He that would lose his life shall find it," was the great secret of Jesus, and He reveals it afresh in every age. Jesus knew that He could not stand forth triumphant in the Garden of Resurrection unless He endured the Cross of Calvary. And the women of England have discovered His great secret. To-day they are bearing the cross of service and sacrifice ; to-morrow will be their resurrection day, their entrance into larger life and liberty.

Fears are often expressed that the franchise for women—and all it involves—may have detrimental results in many directions. Whilst the sheer justice of it is hard to deny, there are many sensible people, both men and women, who dread the effect of woman's greater activity in public life. Most of us pin great faith on the good old formula : "Woman's place is the home," and now when she tells us

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that woman's place is the world, we instinctively shudder before the possible revolution that this new conception may bring about. Let us try to say three very simple things : this larger life will be good for woman as worker, as wife, as mother.

When we say that woman's place is the home, we constantly forget that economic conditions make it impossible for many women to remain at home. Women who do not marry must, in most cases, provide for themselves, and the war has gone to show that they are well able to do so. The doors of most callings are now open to women, and, where that is not the case, rusty hinges are being diligently oiled. Woman has proved her worth in every kind of business, and her great industry, acumen and efficiency have helped to establish her there permanently. She has won her position by sheer capacity, and will keep it so. The vote follows as a necessary corollary. So long as women were mainly within the shelter of the home, this was not so obvious ; the breadwinner could represent the household at the polling-booth. But now that she takes her

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place in the larger life of the nation, she must mould the laws that regulate the national life. It is said that woman loses grace and dignity by meddling with public affairs, but there is a greater indignity than that for woman—that she should have to do the nation's work without sharing in the nation's government. Such unfairness even threatens her essential womanliness; and thus we come to the startling paradox—the franchise may be the preserver of woman's charm and grace. Injustice always embitters life, and the embittered life can never be completely beautiful. Justice, on the other hand, fosters beauty, graciousness and every other attribute of womanhood. The twentieth century woman, endowed with social and political rights so long withheld from previous generations, will not lose but rather gain in every essential quality of womanhood; her freedom cannot hurt her.

But this larger liberty and heavier responsibility will also be good for the woman who marries. As a wife she has nothing to lose but everything to gain by the enrichment of life which the franchise confers; and this

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because she will become more than ever the comrade of her husband. Gone are the days when woman's interests were confined to her home and a circle of friends; her interests are now as wide as those of men, and she follows with deep and genuine concern the affairs of the great world. Art, literature, politics claim her attention and invoke her enthusiasm. There is no domain of human life and thought that does not enlist her sympathy; no project for the betterment of society that does not call forth her aid. These wide interests and generous sympathies enrich her own life and the life of her home. She becomes in every sense the companion of her husband, sharing in his whole thought, absorbed in his ideals, helping in the projects that are dear to his heart. How can there be any disadvantage in a freedom for women that makes for married happiness, in an emancipation that but draws closer the ties of wedded life?

This larger liberty will also be a good thing for the mothers of the country. Often is it said that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." The hearth is the first

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school, the home the birthplace of all faiths and ideals. The child receives his religion, his philosophy, his whole outlook upon life from his mother ; she is the final court of appeal on all matters in dispute during the most formative years of youth. How can she fit herself for the high task of educating the new generation in true and enlightened ways—the generation upon which will fall the arduous labour of reconstruction after the devastating war has spent itself ? She must know and understand the world in which we live, and herself bear a share of responsibility in re-making it. Man alone cannot embark on that undertaking; woman alone would be helpless in face of it. But man and woman together may rebuild civilisation after a Divine pattern. Such a comradeship in love and work is the hope of the world.

“A dream of man and woman,
Diviner but still human,
Solving the riddle old,
Shaping the Age of Gold.”

IX

THE EXAMPLE OF THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

CHRIST in His earthly life was brought into close touch with some of the principal callings of man—His activities embraced many kinds of work. The carpenter may remember with pride that Jesus was apprenticed to that business in His father's shop in Nazareth, and carried it on after Joseph's death. The fisherman may point to the fact that Christ was closely associated with that vocation through His fishermen disciples. The teacher may claim that our Lord made the world His school and all men His pupils. The preacher may assert that Christ was the peerless preacher—"never man spake like this man." And the doctor may boast that there was never such a physician as Jesus. He was master of all branches of the healing art. He possessed every quality of the ideal doctor. His practice extended from one end of the land to the other

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—from snow-clad Lebanon on the north to the Holy City on the south ; from the sea on the west to Jordan and the desert on the east. He was a general practitioner—He dealt with every manner of disease ; yet He had the specialist's knowledge of obscure and mysterious maladies. He took no fees—He did His work for the love of it and for the love of those who sought His aid. He was no seeker after reputation—He besought His patients to tell no man of their cure. He might have made the proud boast which no other physician, however learned or skilled, can ever make—He never knew a case to fail in His hands. Truly the title belongs to Him alone—the Great Physician.

Familiarity with these facts tends to obscure their meaning and dim their beauty. We have read the Gospel story countless times. Many of its matchless words are ours for ever though every Bible should be burnt. We know by heart the record of Christ's healing ministry. Each incident has been engraven on the memory, and in our best moments something of the exceeding loveliness of those

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miracles is apparent to our eyes. In imagination we stand in the Capernaum street at eventide, and watch the slow procession of sick, and halt, and maimed draw near to Him in trembling faith, and depart in trembling joy. Particular instances of healing appeal to us—the man lowered through the roof of the house ; the woman who touched the tassel of His robe ; the blind beggar by the roadside ; the paralytic by the Pool of Bethesda. With wondering awe we stand by the couch of Jairus' daughter ; we watch the funeral procession outside Nain—the funeral procession that became a triumphal procession ; we draw near to the tomb of Lazarus—beholding the supreme miracle, the conquest of death itself. Even so, we have but dimly understood Christ and His healing and life-giving ministry. It may be that God has other ways of revelation besides the Bible story, other methods of instruction besides the Scripture lesson. There is the Bible of human life that is being written every day under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ; there is the gospel of love and service that may be read in the lives of God's children

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of the twentieth century. It may be that the story of the healing ministry that is being so wonderfully exercised in these times of war may reveal to us the healing ministry of Christ in new vividness. Is it not possible that our doctors who are toiling in all our hospitals to-day to give back health and strength to our wounded and stricken soldiers may be doing more than they know? Unconsciously they are sending back our thoughts and hopes to the greatest of all healers—to the source of all healing. When I watch the medical men who are doing such splendid service all along the battle-line, when I see their amazing skill and patience, their enthusiasm, and their devotion, this thought comes to me with the impressiveness of a revelation—if the medical profession be such a noble calling as practised by these doctors, if it calls forth in them many of the supreme qualities of manhood, what must that calling have meant to Christ? Let us recapture an exalted conception of Christ as the Great Physician by watching the physicians of our own time in an hour of great need. When we have paid our meed of admiration to

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the work they do, we shall remember that all such service is but a faint reflection of Christ's service. The men who work under the Red Cross may help us to see with clearer sight and deeper appreciation the Man of the Cross. Let the doctor upon the battlefield lead us into the presence of the Great Physician.

Nothing strikes the outsider more forcibly than the wonderful skill displayed by the medical officers at the Front. It is said that the war has created a new epoch in surgery—so many and wonderful have been the discoveries since the first soldier fell wounded one hot August day more than three years ago. Experience has been so lavish, and opportunities of experiment have been so many, that operations hitherto believed impossible have been performed. A mere layman cannot speak of such things without blundering, but he can at least speak of what he sees and hears day by day. A man badly wounded is brought into hospital. Instantly a doctor brings to bear upon the case all his skill and experience. If the wound is serious, fellow-doctors are called in in consultation. Each contributes

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his opinion, and the result is that whatever can be done by expert treatment or skilful operation is achieved, and the patient gets every chance of recovery. Nothing is more interesting than to listen to a conversation among medical men ; the impression of knowledge, skill, efficiency is irresistibly conveyed. In addition to skill in prescribing treatment and in the use of the operating knife, another sort of skill is also very noticeable—wisdom and tact in dealing with the patient himself. The alarm of the nervous, the lethargy of the despairing, the pessimism of the sorrowful must be dispelled or allayed ; the terrible shock and strain of the battlefield must somehow be eased. Sometimes there arises a situation of tragic pathos that requires all the doctor's skill. Two brothers, fighting together in the same regiment, were both badly wounded, and together they were carried on stretchers to the field ambulance. Placed side by side in the ward, they began to converse as best they could. One brother begged the other to look after his wife and children as he knew he was dying. The other man, not under-

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standing what was asked of him, but knowing his own fatal condition made a similar request to his dying brother. Each repeated his petition over and over again, becoming more insistent as the end drew near—surely no dialogue could have been more pathetic. I do not know what the doctor said or did, but I believe that even in face of that situation of tragedy he would not be baffled.

If there be such skill and patience and tact among the doctors who care for our wounded, what must be the skill of the Great Physician? If these medical officers can command for their work such accurate knowledge, wide experience and extraordinary ability, must not the Divine Healer be infinitely better equipped? Jesus seemed to exercise His healing ministry without any effort, but it would be a shallow interpretation of His miracles to suppose that they were wrought without thought, experience and knowledge. The woman with the issue of blood was only healed by the expenditure of much nervous energy on the part of Jesus—"I perceive that virtue hath gone out of Me," He exclaimed. We have no right to assume

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that Christ brought healing to men without paying the cost. His skill may have come to Him by other paths than those of study and books, but in some way it was purchased at a heavy price. He was no magic worker—no fairy wand was in His hand. He cast a spell over men, it is true, but it was the spell of goodness. Other physicians attain to knowledge and skill by the burning of the midnight oil—He attained to His power by making His whole life a flame of sacrifice upon God's altar.

The joyous enthusiasm of medical men is also very noticeable ; theirs is a most cheerful profession. Most doctors love their work and take pride in it. It may seem paradoxical that men who are brought into such close contact with suffering and the tragic side of life should yet be so joyful. There is an interesting field of study that has hardly been explored—the relationship between vocation and happiness. What kind or kinds of work give the worker most satisfaction and pleasure ? Are there some sorts of labour that pay a higher rate of interest in happiness than others ? Can we specify employments according to

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their joy-giving properties ? Perhaps it may be found that work which benefits others always makes for happiness. On this showing the doctor has every reason for happiness, and very little for sadness. Such a theory would also explain the joy of the Great Physician. He went about doing good. His life was one long outpouring of self for the sake of others. The self-sacrifice of Christ far transcends that of any man, and when I see the happiness of our physicians as they labour at their healing work upon the battlefields of France, I understand better the depths of His happiness. When I hear their merry laughter when the day's work is done and see the contentment of these toilers in the fields of suffering, I no longer marvel at the joy of Christ.

The supreme quality of the doctor on active service is his fearless devotion to duty. Very often the medical man is called upon to face every danger in the pursuit of his calling. When an advance is being attempted he goes into the zone of danger and establishes a precarious aid-post in a shell-swept trench. He continues his work of mercy day and night,

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and sometimes it is only cut short by death itself. There is no work on the field of battle quite like this. The combatant has the zest of battle to help him to do his part, but the doctor goes into equal danger unarmed. Power to do his work comes from within—the Divine impulse to save life. When the war is over many a doctor will return to his practice in England, and none will guess from his quiet demeanour the deeds of courage that stand to his credit. Special facilities of observing these men have been mine, and the memory of it will never die. Once again are we led from man to Christ, from the human to the Divine. He who can inspire men to brave the dangers of the battlefield and carry on their work of healing there amidst the ghastly conditions of modern warfare must Himself possess infinite courage. The British nation owes a tremendous debt to the army doctors. How can we ever repay it? Have they not rescued our sons from the jaws of death? Have they not bound up their wounds on the field of battle? Have they not satisfied their thirst when thirst had become an agony? Have they not given

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them sleep when they tossed about in weariness and pain ? Have they not eased their sufferings ? Have they not restored them to our homes—frail and weak perhaps, but with the promise of renewed strength ? These priceless services they have rendered to us ungrudgingly and gladly ; but there is something else they have done all unconsciously. These doctors of the battlefield have led our thoughts beyond all human endeavours and achievements of healing unto the source of all health : we have seen again the Great Physician.

X

THE NEW GLORY OF WAR

It was a dreary day in late winter. My comrade on the march observed that he had never seen anything more desolate than the country through which we were passing. It was part of the reconquered territory—that part of France that was won back in the Battle of the Somme at the cost of so many brave lives. The whole countryside was torn and shattered by the hail of shell-fire that had swept over it during months of hard fighting. Scarcely a vestige of vegetation remained. On every side as far as the eye could see were signs of war's havoc. To add to the dreariness of the scene, snow began to fall and the wind increased in violence. The British soldier, sheltering behind a rude hut on the hillside, looked his unhappiness. His familiar smile was gone—his laughter was not to be heard. It was a day to make the optimist turn pessimist; there was nothing in such an environ-

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ment to give the slightest cause or excuse for merriment. That night we watched the wounded being brought into hospital. One recalled Winston Churchill's pitiless phrase—"men in bloody rags carried into the field ambulances," and there before our eyes was the grim reality.

When I came to think over the day's experiences—the dull monotony of the soldier's life, the cruel hardships of the campaign, the sufferings of the wounded and dying, I scornfully asked myself the question, Where is the glory of war? In face of the actual facts, can any man say that war possesses any glamour, any fascination, any beauty or glory? The obvious answer is a stern negative. Our fighting men are unanimous in condemning war and all its ways. They regard it as an unmitigated evil—an evil so ruthless and terrible that nothing can be said in its praise. Whatever glamour attached to war in ancient times, it has gone now. Nothing remains but war's ugliness and cruelty.

And yet have I put at the head of this

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chapter the title, "The New Glory of War." Is it merely an empty phrase, containing no body of reality? My contention is going to be that there *is* a glory of war, but it is a new glory. It consists not in the flash of spears, the glittering uniform, the passionate battle-charge, the rousing war music, the thrill of victory; these things are scarcely known in modern warfare. The glory lies in the men themselves—those qualities of head and heart and will that shine out so clearly amid the desolation and dreariness of active service—their cheerfulness and patience, their courage and endurance, their loyalty to home and country. Looked at rightly, these spiritual attributes are more glorious than any victory, more thrilling than any battle-charge. So do I find a new glory of war, more lustrous than any other. It would be no misnomer to call it the glory of the Lord. I see it everywhere—the spirit of patient cheerfulness that carries our lads forward through dark and troublous days; the spirit of grim determination that may flag at times, but never breaks; the spirit of indomitable hopefulness that looks beyond the

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present hour to happier days ; all these qualities of heart and temper that mark the soldier on active service. The new glory of war is a splendour of beautiful feeling and conduct. In the midst of all that revolts and discourages, amid the grey wastes of desolated country, the charred remains of ruined villages, the horrible violence of the guns, and the torture of the actual combat, these things stand out in unmistakable beauty. Human character never shone in greater brilliance than it does in the war area ; it is a bit of heaven in the midst of hell.

It were worth spending years on active service to realise this clearly. A moment almost inevitably comes to the thinking man at the Front when he sees humanity all afresh and sees it as something very noble and lovable. Human nature, which we may have affected to despise and treat with contempt, suddenly appears very different. Its meanness and poverty disappear—it assumes the garments of royalty. Narrow, cynical views of life are blotted out by the fresh revelation of man's true greatness. A traveller through some dark

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ravine might come to think that the whole world is a valley without any wide views or vistas of beauty, until he climbed out of the defile and stood upon some broad tableland, gazing out toward the far-distant horizon. Then he would revoke his earlier judgment and acknowledge that the world is wide and spacious. Is it not so with the traveller through the world of human nature ? Does not the student of men sometimes experience the joy of emerging from the confining ravine of selfishness and narrowness on to the great tableland of life, where the winds are fresh and invigorating and the view an endless panorama. The student of humanity at the Front is privileged to stand upon the tableland of life ; and his eyes are dazzled with the sheer beauty and splendour of what he sees. War has proved the great revealer, discovering glory and honour in unlikely places.

This new glory of war shines forth not only on the field of battle but in the homeland also. Sometimes I wonder whether the finest heroism is not found among the fathers and mothers who have given their sons to the war. " They

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also serve who only stand and wait," is a terribly true saying, and such service is amongst the richest that has been offered on the altar of freedom. There is no nobler sacrifice than that which many a woman makes, giving the son of her love, or the husband of her heart, or the lover of her hopes and dreams to the conflict. There can be no peace for her henceforth—no peace until he returns from the war—and until that day dawns, if it ever dawns for her, she will be tortured on the rack of suspense. These quiet sufferings in the homes of England, these heroic sacrifices for the freedom of the world, belong to the new glory of war as much as any deed of gallantry upon the field. I have been struck with the dignity of men and women who have lost their dearest in the war. How courageously they face life! How cheerfully they work for those who are still fighting! How steadily they believe in the triumph of right! They have made the greatest sacrifice they could make, and there is a noble pride in their surrender. The homes of England are filled with the new glory of war, the glory that shines from patient, suffering

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hearts, the glory that radiates from every sacrifice gladly made.

Will the glory fade away? Will the heroism of the man at the Front forsake him when he goes back to a peaceful occupation? Will the fine unselfishness that is found everywhere in the army disappear when men are thrown back into the mill of industrialism? Will that wonderful nobility of soul that radiates from not a few of our soldier sons depart from them when they exchange the trench for the office in the city? Will the glory that illuminates the homes of our soldiers and shines in the hearts of the fathers and mothers also fade away when there is no longer need to think of their fighting sons? Will the heroic dignity with which so many bereaved folk are facing life to-day continue to uphold them when the excitement of war is no longer with us? It is possible that we shall all be the pained witnesses of a great declension in the spirit and temper of the nation after the war. The heroism that urges our lads over the top and sustains them in the attack upon the enemy may be little in evidence when the more

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prosaic battles of life have to be fought in later days. But this war will be an unrelieved tragedy if we fail to conserve the finer elements in the national spirit to-day, and carry them forward into the period of reconstruction that will follow the declaration of peace. The new glory of war—the heroism and patience, the unselfishness and tenderness of men and women—must be made a permanent asset in the life of the nation, the Empire and the world.

How can this be done? The high ideals with which we entered the war must never be lost to view. Let it for ever be remembered that we drew the sword, conscious that in honour we could do no other, and the remembrance of that decision will help to keep aglow the new glory of the war. What shall we say of the war “ten, twenty, thirty, forty years on”? If our thoughts about it have lost moral tone and vigour, and we can speak of it cynically, calling it a struggle for national supremacy or a bid for commercial ascendancy over Germany, then the moral harvest of the war will be lost indeed. But that will not

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happen. The boys who are now fighting will not cheapen the struggle by any such low estimate of its significance. They will not stain the banner of liberty by dragging it in the dust of life, but they will tell their children and grandchildren that they fought for freedom, the breath of life. They will say that they endured the hardships of war for the sake of the unborn. They will call these days of war glorious, for the spirit of man was exalted above the common levels and rejoiced in its new-found opportunities of self-expression and self-sacrifice. They will whisper of sad, bitter experiences, telling how a beloved comrade fell in action, how he died like the hero he was with home-messages upon his lips, how they buried him upon the battlefield, simply and hurriedly, with hardly time for a tear. And aged voices will tremble with emotion, and dim eyes will glow with pride, as they tell of the victory that came at last, the victory almost despaired of, but grasped at last in no uncertain fashion. The nightmare of militarism passed away never to return, and this earth became what it was meant to be—a home, the

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home of the free-born. If all who have endured and suffered in this war carry that high conception of it into future years, the glory of it will never depart ; rather will it be a creative and formative force in the life of the world, leading us to achievements of which the war was the prelude. We have come to understand through the sufferings of war that the price of freedom must ever be high when it is paid with the lives of our sons. Let us learn further that "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance." When that principle has become ours, we shall be men and women indeed—men and women with whom the future of the world is safe.

XI

THE SENTRY AT THE HOUR OF DAWN

THERE is no more impressive or romantic figure in the army than the sentry. Around him there have gathered wonderful stories and exquisite poems. He is a man all by himself, standing out from the hosts of other fighters, occupying a position of solitary grandeur. Often have I passed him on dark, winter evenings in France. Sometimes he guards the road leading to a town occupied by our troops. Sometimes his post is at a solitary cross-roads where he keenly scrutinises every passer-by. However dark the night, however cold the wind, however boisterous the storm, he never moves from his place. Motionless, watchful, intent upon duty, the sentry stands—truly a noble figure. In the trenches hundreds of lives depend upon his faithfulness. The tired, war-worn soldiers lie down to sleep at night, knowing that their comrade on sentry duty will not fail them. He has to fight the

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twin enemies of fatigue and sleep. He has to keep a sharp look-out on the hostile trenches, straining his eyes in the darkness over no-man's land, ready to sound the alarm at the first approach of danger. Hour after hour drags past, and at length a faint reddening in the eastern sky heralds the new day. The man on duty knows that soon his anxieties may be stilled and his responsibilities laid aside. Presently all his comrades will be awake and standing to—his work has been accomplished. The light grows stronger ; the morning breeze blows upon his face ; the stir of his brother soldiers is all around him. The sentry is glad at these signs, and if—in Bible language—the question were asked, " Watchman, what of the night ? " he would answer in joyous and hopeful accents, " The morning cometh."

That picture of the sentry as he is to be seen everywhere on active service is painted for a specific reason. England, Europe—and we may now add America—are passing through a night of sorrow and tragedy. For many it seems as though there would be no sunrise, no to-morrow. But, like the sentry in the

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trenches, we watch for the break of day. The night of sorrow will soon be over-past. The morning will presently come. We are on the outlook for the new day, and we believe that the powers of darkness are weakening, the dominion of the night is loosening its grasp. This is a moment of quiet expectancy and wise hopefulness. Just as the sentry welcomes the morning after a night of weariness, so shall we welcome the light that will presently shine everywhere. We stand at the sentry-post at the hour of dawn.

The sentry sees, first, the streaks of light in the east that tell him of the coming day ; and the watchman, looking through the darkness that hangs over the world, perceives the coming of the new day—the day of peace. During the Crimean War John Bright described the sufferings of England in words that have become immortal :

“The Angel of Death has been abroad hroughout the land ; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of

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our doors, that he may spare and pass on ; he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and lowly." These words, spoken in the House of Commons sixty years ago, are even truer to-day than they were then. Where the Angel of Death claimed a hundred victims then, he claims ten thousand to-day, and truly cottage and castle have given of their best. The history of England contains many records of the sufferings of her people, but probably there have been no sufferings like unto those that are borne so patiently and heroically to-day. Whether one thinks of the soldier upon the field of battle, the sailor on the sea, or the people at home, tears and heartbreak are everywhere. Yet, strange and paradoxical though it may seem, out of this very agony comes our hope for the future. Just because war is what it is and means what it does, we shall never want war again. The sufferings of the present time are the best guarantee that they will not be allowed to recur. Try to imagine what will happen when the war is over. The armies of the world will flow back

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to their own countries. Every city, every town, every village will receive its quota of fighting men. These men, fresh from trench and battlefield, will have a tale to tell that will leave an indelible mark on the memory of those who hear it; those living stories that fall from burning lips will never be forgotten. On cold winter nights, when all are gathered round the fireside, these stories of France and Flanders, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, Salonika and Italy, will be retold. The rising generation will hear them and never forget them. Not the glory and pomp of war, not the thrill and joy of battle will be spoken of, but the cruelty, tragedy and futility of it all. A new idea of war will be born in the entire consciousness of humanity—as a pitiless, unfeeling, blood-thirsty, life-destroying monster; and this hatred of war will help to make its recurrence impossible. Thus, the sentry at the hour of dawn sees the day coming—the day of peace.

There is a second experience that comes to the sentry at the hour of dawn—he feels the fresh, morning wind blowing upon his face.

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Here, too, the analogy holds true. The watchman, looking out upon the world at this hour of dawn, feels the breath of faith upon his soul. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and many of us believe that the wind of Divine inspiration is beginning to blow across the world at this time.

It is not often that one finds oneself in agreement with that gifted and original novelist H. G. Wells. Yet his great book on the war, "Mr. Britling Sees It Through," will continue to make a wide appeal. It is an attempt to describe the change wrought in the soul of England, and more particularly in the soul of one man, through the coming of the war. The book describes how Mr. Britling's son went to the war, and how the father suffered and came thereby to the truth. There is a moving scene in which Mr. Britling receives a telegram stating that his son has been killed in action. That chapter has been considered to be as great as anything in Tolstoy in its dramatic power and tragic pathos. The terrible experiences through which he passed made a religious man of him. He came to this conclusion :

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“Religion is the first thing and the last thing, and until a man has found God and been found by God, he begins at no beginning, he works to no end. He may have his friendships, his partial loyalties, his scraps of honour. But all these things fall into place, and life falls into place only with God. Only with God.”

Is this experience typical? Is the war doing anything to bring men and women nearer to God? Many there are who not only deny that the sufferings of these days have had any spiritual value, but assert that, on the contrary, the world is less religious than ever it was. There may not be much visible evidence for a revival of faith—few signs of a great movement Godward. But those who have eyes that can see and ears that can hear, have much that is encouraging to report. The men who have suffered privations on the field of battle are bigger men, wiser men, more serious men than they previously were; and God will have readier access to their lives. Women, too, who have passed through anxiety, suspense and bereavement, will have made the discovery that Christ alone helps in the hour of need.

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The whole world, cleansed by its tears, ennobled by its sufferings, may yet draw nearer to God. That is the hope and prayer of all who are seriously concerned about the future of mankind. The sentry, looking out upon the world at this hour of dawn, feels the breath of faith upon his soul.

Again, the sentry at the hour of dawn hears the stir of his companions who have slept, and feels conscious of the comfort of comradeship. So the watchman, at the dawn of the new day, feels conscious as never before of the reality and blessedness of brotherhood.

There is much happiness for the chaplain who is at work among our men at the Front—happiness so keen at times as to compensate for all the discomfort and difficulties of the life. And one of the most joyous experiences is to observe the unselfish comradeship that exists everywhere in the army. When one contrasts the condition of things in industrial life before the war—the jealousy, suspicion and selfishness that were everywhere rampant—with the spirit that is to be found at the Front, the spirit of comradeship and kindness, the spirit

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of brotherhood and love, one marvels at the change that has been wrought. I write these words whilst a great battle is raging. Only a day or two ago a beautiful incident took place. A lad was wounded, and his companion, a boy of slender build and strength, attempted to carry him back to a place of safety. Again and again he sank beneath his load ; but he would not lay down his burden. To me that is a parable and a prophecy. The war has brought to life the love that always burns in human hearts. The beauty of brotherhood has been revealed to us even in the throes of conflict. Such a revelation is bound to work for good. Life can never be quite the same again. The sentry, looking out upon the world at the hour of dawn, sees his comrades gathering round him—the day of brotherhood has come.

XII

THE SWORD IN THE SOUL

"YEA, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also," said the aged Simeon to Mary, the mother of Jesus, when the babe was brought into the Temple to be presented to the Lord. We do not know, for we are not told, by what sign this just and devout man recognised in the tiny infant the Lord's Anointed. To expectant eyes and hearts, revelations are easily made, and when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus into the Temple that day, Simeon had no misgivings or uncertainties in his mind; the conviction came upon him with overwhelming force that the great hope and desire of his life had been granted him. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," he cried in joyful tones. He went on to prophesy what Jesus should mean to mankind: "A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel."

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He then spoke directly to Mary: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against," and then, in a parenthesis of deep insight and prophetic accuracy, he exclaimed, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."

Jesus was to bring incalculable blessings into human life. To Israel He was the long-promised Messiah, and to the rest of the world a burning and a shining light. His spirit would either attract or repel men, and their attitude to Him would reveal their innermost life and character. What they thought of Him would unerringly indicate what they were in themselves. He was "a sign . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Such was the inspired Simeon's prophetic declaration, and it is almost a surprise to find that in the midst of his glorious theme he should remember Mary, and have a special word for her. The splendour of his Messianic vision did not blind Simeon to the more personal and tender aspects of the situation, and he saw clearly one piteous fact: Jesus would bring

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blessings to the lives of many, but He would bring sorrow and anguish to His own mother. The price of His greatness would be partly paid by her who bore Him. His idealism, His devotion to His high calling, His sacrificial sufferings and death would cause her many a pang of grief. Much of His life was to be lived in spiritual loneliness. Many of His thoughts and hopes would be unshared, many of His actions misunderstood, His very sufferings and death misinterpreted. This was to be the great sorrow of Mary's life—that she would have to remain outside so much of her Son's life, that she would be removed from Him in thought and sympathy. If she could only share His life to the full—His ideals, His actions, His sufferings—she would be joyful even in the midst of sorrow. Her mother's anguish was in the unshared thought, the unshared life, and the unshared death of her Son. This was the sword that would pierce her soul.

The sorrow of Mary is typical of the sorrow of many mothers to-day. In their measure the mothers of our soldiers feel the pang of

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grief that she felt, for they also know that they cannot altogether share the thought, the life and the death of their boys. The sword has pierced through their souls also. Let us trace the history of Mary's sorrow in relation to Jesus, and the same story will be found written on the hearts of the mothers of England in these days of war. It is a sorrow that grows more acute—a wound that deepens. At first there is but the sharp prick of the sword—the unshared ideal; then the sword goes inwards towards the heart—the unshared life of hardship; at last the sword may pierce the very soul—the unshared death.

Mary felt the prick of the sword when the child Jesus was found in the Temple conversing with the doctors of the law, for it was then that she received the first indication that her son's life was not to be always in her care and keeping. The familiar story need not be retold; how, as the caravan of pilgrims moved slowly northwards, leaving the Holy City behind them, but carrying with them the inspiring memories of the Feast Days within her walls, the child of Joseph and Mary was

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not to be found. Inquiries were made in one band of pilgrims and then in another, but Jesus was nowhere to be seen. His parents, now thoroughly anxious, returned to Jerusalem, and after a futile search of three days, found Him in the Temple, deep in conversation with the doctors of the law—the religious leaders of the day. Mary's reproachful question can easily be understood; it came straight from her anxious heart; and yet Jesus, who must have comprehended what she was feeling, calmly replied, "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" He obediently set out with them for Nazareth, but I think that Mary knew that the boy who now walked by her side was not the same boy who had come with her to Jerusalem the previous week. Then He talked brightly and eagerly of the long anticipated visit; but now He was quiet and pensive, as though He had plenty of food for thought. All at once Mary felt that her boy was alone, and she could not enter into His entire life. He had spoken in a way which showed that there was an ideal in His heart she could not understand, a thought she could

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not share, a consciousness she could not fathom. This feeling would grow stronger in later years, but this was her first experience of it. It was the unshared thought ; the prick of the sword.

And many a mother has felt the prick of that sword during the last three years of war. She had fondly imagined that her boy would always be by her side and never beyond the reach of her care. Had she not his complete confidence ? Did she not share all his joys and sorrows ? Was he not still within the shelter of the home ? There seemed no reason why this ideal relationship of mother and son should be disturbed, and then, like a bolt from the blue, came the news that disturbed every relationship of life. From August, 1914, onwards, the same pathetic, yet soul-stirring scene was enacted in countless homes : the son saying that he must go to the war, the mother pleading that he should not make so great a decision so hastily. All sorts of objections leapt to her lips : Was the need really so great ? Was her son not already doing necessary work ? And when none of these pleadings availed, the hardest of all

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remained to be answered : Had he no thought for his parents ? The reproach was like the reproach that Mary made, and the answer was after the manner of Jesus : "Do you not know that I must be about my country's service ?" An ideal had mastered him, an ideal of duty and hardship that his mother could not yet understand or make her own. She felt that her boy had a view of life that came in conflict with his love for her, and the unshared thought touched her to the quick. It was the prick of the sword.

When Jesus was in the full tide of His ministry, and men and women were flocking to hear Him from every part of the land, the mother of Jesus with His brothers and sisters came to endeavour to put a stop to what seemed to be His mistaken zeal. They probably wished to advise Him to carefulness, to make Him less indifferent to the hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees, to persuade Him to spare Himself somewhat in His arduous and toilsome mission. When the message was brought to Jesus that they waited without to speak to Him, He exclaimed with a wave of

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His hand over the crowd of people gathered round Him, "Behold, my mother, my sisters, and my brethren!" And I imagine when Mary was informed of this reply, she felt as she had felt long before when Jesus as a boy had declared that He must be about His Father's business—only much more deeply. Then it had been an unshared thought that caused her pain; now it was an unshared life. He had left His mother's home; He had gone forth on His great ministry; He had become absorbed in a thousand new activities; He had gathered around Him a band of devoted followers, and it would almost seem that He would dispense with His mother's love and care.

There is the analogous experience in modern life. It is hard for mothers to send forth their sons to the war, but a greater sorrow is before them—the sorrow of hearing of their bitter experiences on active service without being able to help or succour. Helpless must every mother stay at home, whilst her boy faces the terrors of modern warfare. In the night of storm, she lies sleepless, thinking of him and

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how he fares. When there is news of a great battle, she trembles, for who knows but her boy may be in the fighting? She pores over his letters, reading between the lines the thing he would not write. The sight of a telegram sets her heart in a flutter: what dread news may it not contain? I write these words in a French village. On the other side of the narrow street, a woman sits by the window, reading the newspaper. Her boys are all at the war, and as she reads of the fighting in Champagne where so many of the sons of France have laid down their lives, I think I understand in some dim way what she is thinking, and feeling, and suffering. It is the unshared life of hardship that hurts her most—the sword is piercing inwards towards the heart.

For Mary, the mother of Jesus, the hardest ordeal came at the end of His life when she stood by the Cross and watched Him die. She had probably shared the view of His disciples that His ministry was leading forward towards a kingdom of earthly power and splendour. She may have cherished the hope that even at the last moment something would happen to

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avert His death and turn His shame and humiliation into a triumph. But nothing of that sort happened, and she had to watch Him dying upon the Cross. Her cup of agony was full and running over. No bitterness, no pang of anguish, no depth of pain could be added to her sorrow. This was her supreme grief—the death of her son which she could not avert or share with Him, and the words of Simeon were verified in tears and blood: “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.”

It is only too easy to recognise the modern counterpart of so bitter an experience. One writes with hesitancy and almost craves pardon for writing at all about the sorrow of mothers whose sons have died the soldier's death. How heavy the blow none can say. The wonder and surprise of it is that the keen edge of sorrow does not snap the cord of life altogether, or, at least, take away for ever the joy and serenity of life. But I have gone into homes that have experienced this greatest grief and found there a lamp of happiness burning quietly. No word of repining is

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spoken. There are no signs of cynicism or rebellion in the atmosphere of these homes of the great sacrifice. Life's tasks have been bravely resumed, and a spirit of serene courage shines out from every word and action. Yet the wound has gone deep, for these mothers know something of Mary's anguish ; a sword has pierced through their own souls also.

There is finally the blessed fact that Mary's sword-wound was healed—healed by the words of love that Her son spoke from the Cross, healed also by the new life of liberty and joy which His sacrifice brought into the world. Mothers of England, mothers of the slain on Europe's battlefields, the sword-wound in your soul will not always remain an open wound. There will be something of healing for you as there was for the mother of Jesus. There is the memory of the tender past—those happy days of his boyhood and early manhood—and these memories are for the healing of the wound. There is the memory of his dauntless courage upon the field of battle, his patience, his endurance, his gallantry, and, at last, his glorious death, and your pride in all that is

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for the healing of the sword-wound. Then there is the new life of liberty that his sacrifice has made possible for the world—the free life for the free-born—and we who live to enter into that hard-won heritage of freedom will never forget the price that was paid. Mothers of our dead comrades, we salute you with reverence. Every one of you has known something of the sorrow that Mary knew: “a sword has pierced through thy own soul also.” But we remember another word that was spoken of the mother of Jesus, and in very deed it is true of you also: “Blessed art thou among women.”

XIII

A SOLDIER'S GRAVE

“PUT off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”—the Divine message came to Moses as he gazed with wonder and awe at the bush that burned but was not consumed ; and there are hours in the life of every man when he hears that command and knows that he stands in a holy place. Accustomed to think of life in terms of prose and to regard our surroundings as very ordinary, we have all had the experience of being startled and subdued by a vision of the sublime. The pilgrim-way of life is dusty and unattractive. We tramp its weary miles with stolid patience without much expectation of change, and then we come to a bend of the road and find ourselves face to face with undreamed-of beauty. In exchange for the confined pathway with its limited view and oppressive atmosphere, we are granted a wide expanse of glorious country ; and if we had

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grown faithless and cynical whilst the ways of life were commonplace, faith and awe return upon our souls as we gaze toward the distant horizon—the meeting-place of heaven and earth. We stand once more on holy ground. This experience comes at times to the man on active service. He knows what it means to be ushered suddenly out of sordid and unfriendly surroundings into a quiet, sacred place. The soldier's burial-ground never fails to convey a sense of the infinite—it speaks to us of God. Long rows of white, wooden crosses, each marking the grave of a soldier who has died on the battlefield—how familiar is the sight out here, and yet none can look upon it without emotion. The most callous and rough-tongued soldier becomes quiet and reverent when he passes by the graves of his comrades. For the nonce, heaven has sway in all our hearts; God speaks and we hear His voice.

The pen is a clumsy instrument of expression when the topic is one so tender and sacred as this. So easy is it to say the wrong word—the word that wounds deeper instead of healing.

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Every chaplain comes to know many of the military burial-grounds, and the place chosen is almost always such as love itself would have chosen. One large cemetery in which five hundred of our brave fellows are buried is beautifully situated amid quiet fields, and a stream flows past it; the Psalmist's testimony is irresistibly recalled, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters." Another place of burial is in a wood, not far from the strain and rage of battle, and yet so located as to suggest utter security and withdrawal from strife. In a night of fierce fighting I stood by an open grave in that wood-girt cemetery. The guns were thundering loudly as the service was being held, and the significance of the hour was not lost upon at least one soldier who stood by his comrade's grave. "That was our parting salute to him," he said, "but he would not hear it." The lad spoke as one who regarded his friend's life, not as finished, but as beginning—beginning in a world that knows not the roar of cannon, nor the madness of war. Another graveyard was made just outside the

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trench ; here we buried men who died in action. Surely a strange place to find God's acre, it may be said—almost in the presence of the enemy ; yet the consciousness of danger did not take from the sense of God's presence as another weary warrior was laid to rest. However, the most pathetic thing I have seen on all the battle front was a solitary soldier's grave. It was different from all others because it was absolutely alone. The man had died on the march and was buried by the roadside. A simple cross marked the place. The country around was flat and dreary, and not a human habitation within sight. Truly he lies there in lonely glory, but there is no gainsaying the glory. That solitary soldier's grave recalled the beautiful poem by Rupert Brooke who in his death has fulfilled its prophecy :—

“ If I should die, think only this of me,
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England ; there shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed ;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave once her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's breathing English air,
Washed by the waters, blessed by suns of home.

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“And think this soul, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less,
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England
given,
Her sights and sounds, dreams happy as her day
And laughter, learnt of friends, and gentleness
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.”

Such sights as these very naturally suggest the question—What has the soldier to say about immortality? Does he believe that these quiet burial-grounds hold prisoner all who are laid there? Does he maintain that the bullet or shell which brings death's message has the final victory? Has his comrade with whom he talked and laughed but yesterday no more existence now except that his body has become an ingredient of the cold earth? Shall the dead warrior hear no tidings of the victory for which he gave his life? Does death end all according to the British soldier? The answers here given to this flood of questions are culled from actual experience; indeed, they are literal transcripts from the book of life.

Here is a solid fact that may prove a foundation upon which to build—the average soldier

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never denies the possibility of immortality. Such an assertion may seem somewhat feeble, but in reality it is very significant. The materialistic science of the nineteenth century is a spent force so far as the young manhood of the twentieth is concerned. Most of the men who are fighting for England to-day were born too late to come under the influence of that school, and they are much more prone to accept the new spiritual interpretation of life which has been gaining ground in recent years. In addition to that, it is surprising to find how large a number of our men retain the kernel of the religious teaching that they received in Sunday school, church, and home. They may not be religious men in the accepted sense of the term—probably they had drifted out of touch with all religious organisations. But a man who gives up the Church does not always find it so easy to give up the truth, and many who had to all intents and purposes joined the masses of the indifferent instinctively cling to the great truths of God in the hour of peril and need. It is enough to watch the faces of our lads as they stand around the grave of a com-

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rade. When the triumphant challenge of St. Paul rings out—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" or the tender promise of Christ is recalled—"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you," there is no scepticism in their eyes, but rather a great and ardent longing that these things may indeed be so. These men decline to accept the doctrine of despair and pessimism which declares that victory belongs to the grave. Such a view is a shock to the moral nature, an outrage upon justice and goodness, a blasphemy against God Himself. The healthy-minded soldier, whose instincts are sound at bottom, will have none of it. He commits his comrade's body to the grave in all reverence; but he commits his spirit into the hands of the living God.

It is only fair to admit, however, that the British soldier has no definite creed with regard to immortality. If you were to ask him the blunt question, "Why do you believe in immortality?" he might have little or nothing to say in reply. For the understanding of a

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soldier's faith it is absolutely essential to remember that he trusts his heart rather than his mind. Not by the reason but by intuition does he come to a sure faith in immortality. Is it a sign of weakness that faith should be instinctive rather than logical? The answer to that question depends upon another—Which stands a man in better stead in the hour of crisis—cold reason or an instinctive conviction? Can we by taking thought find peace in the hour of storm and stress? Is the mind able to lead us into security when our whole world is swaying in uncertainty? The very conditions of war make clear and logical thought difficult, and when the mind fails to find satisfaction, the heart, the soul, the entire personality—call it what you will—may throw itself upon faith and be at rest. This is certainly the method of the battlefield. In a world of sorrow, wounds and death, exact thinking may be impossible; yet these tragic facts help rather than hinder the soul in its quest for God.

One wintry morning a group of men gathered around a comrade's grave for the

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last tender rites. It was yet dark, for the place was not far from the enemy's lines. As the service began, great melancholy hung over us all. Death seemed to hold sway everywhere, and we sadly submitted to its dominion. But, meanwhile, the dawn was coming, and the light grew stronger every moment. With the coming of day, faith revived in our hearts. Our comrade seemed not dead, but living and present with us. At last came the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord ; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." As the cry of triumph sounded out, the sun appeared on the horizon, bathing the world in light ; and at the same time there came upon our souls "the light that never was on sea or land"—the light of Faith.

XIV

WHAT THE RETURNING SOLDIERS WILL EXPECT

Paper read at the Spring Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, on May 9th, 1916.

BEFORE one can give any sort of answer to the question : What will the returning soldiers expect ? a prior query must be put : What effect is military life having upon young men ? What difference is the army making in their characters, dispositions and outlook upon life ? Our starting point must be the soldier himself. We must learn to know him, and what this thing is meaning to him, before we can go on to ask how the Church can meet his needs when he comes home. We must understand the soldier's heart, and that knowledge will guide us in our preparations.

A young fellow of twenty, let us say, donned the khaki uniform of a private a year and a half ago in those first rousing months of the war. He has been a soldier ever since, first in

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the training camp in England, and latterly on active service in France. In the home country he learnt to endure the severe discipline of the army. He was drilled and drilled and drilled until he became automatically perfect in obeying any order that might conceivably be given on parade. He went route marches innumerable, carrying a pack that mysteriously increased in weight with every mile. He ate army stew until he came to believe that all other processes of cooking had died out. He got so accustomed to sleeping on a hard floor that the luxury of a bed on his occasional week-ends at home only made him uncomfortable. He was inspected countless times by all sorts of military authorities—from Lord Kitchener down to his own platoon commander, and he discovered to his dismay that his Lordship is not the only man of iron—it is the Second-Lieutenant that has the heart of steel. In short, he got used to everything the army implies—things both bad and good ; on the one hand a certain amount of hardship and the curtailment of personal liberty ; on the other, a healthy open-air life and good

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comradeship, to say nothing of a conscience absolutely at peace.

So much for his period of training in this country. At last the call came, and, within forty-eight hours, he was transferred from the home camp to a village within the war area. Soon came the memorable night when he went into the trenches for the first time—no soldier forgets that. He felt quite thrilled when he fired his first accurate shot at an invisible enemy, but he soon settled down to the more prosaic task of simply sticking it. Then followed many weary months in which the same routine was gone through; a few days in the trenches and a few days out—the same monotonous round over and over again. There are four elements in active service that that soldier of ours will never get to like—the physical discomforts, the constant presence of danger, the monotony of the life, and the apparent endlessness of the struggle.

Such, then, are some of the experiences which the young men of the nation are passing through at the present time. What effect are these experiences having upon them?

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To put it in a word, the *boys* will come back *men*. No one will deny that these young fellows who have borne the brunt of a winter's campaign on the Western Front, or passed through the fiery ordeal of the Gallipoli Expedition, have done a man's work and lived a man's life. The sheer hardness of it all makes an irresistible appeal to the strongest elements in a man's nature. The outdoor life, the exposure to every wind that blows, calls forth the full vigour of his manhood. The constant presence of danger is a challenge to coolness and courage. The knowledge that he is fighting for the right—that he is taking his part in a struggle that is deciding the world's destiny—keeps him faithful and even joyous through it all. The moral standard of the army, consequently, is high, and the majority of our men are leading clean and temperate lives. I would give this testimony. I have been six months at the Front. Every day I see hundreds and sometimes thousands of men—which in the aggregate must be a vast number. Hardly ever in the whole course of my experience as a chaplain in France have I

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seen a drunken soldier. It may be replied that drink is difficult to get. That is true, but there are ways of evading regulations, and the complete absence of intemperance is a splendid tribute to the high moral tone of the army.

What is the religious situation? I shall have more to say about that presently, but for the moment it may be said that the average soldier is decidedly disposed to give Christianity a friendly hearing, and is ready to respond to the message that is strong enough and deep enough to appeal to his true manhood. I firmly believe that when the soldiers return home the Church will have the finest opportunity that has come to it for several generations. The question is: Will the Church be equal to the task?

I want to make this address as practical as possible, and I want to ask: What kind of preaching will be most effective among our young men when they return from the war? I have been trying to imagine what that young private soldier of ours, who is now in the trenches, will think and feel when he returns to the Church in which he was brought up. I

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have tried to picture him sitting in the old pew and looking up as the minister gives out his text. What kind of a message will win his heart ? What kind of a sermon will command his full assent, and draw him into the fellowship and service of Christ ? I can only be guided by my own experiences as a chaplain in making the suggestions I do. I have in mind many a conversation with soldiers of all sorts, and I am persuaded that that lad of ours will welcome a great simplicity and directness in our preaching before everything else. Remember what he has gone through—an experience so hard and terrible as to strip him of all artificiality ; an ordeal so severe and pitiless that only the real things in his character stand secure. He has faced death fearlessly many a time, and so has learnt to face all things fearlessly. Do you wonder that he will want to have the deep things of God presented in language as plain and direct as a man can use ? Also it is to be remembered that the very nature of a soldier's work, with its calls to unselfishness, heroism and self-sacrifice, helps him to understand the essence of Chris-

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tianity, and so will make him impatient of everything but central truths in the pulpit. I have been amazed to discover how few soldiers fail to understand the Cross of Christ. They have borne a cross themselves—the cross of hardship, loneliness, and pain, and when at Eastertide you speak about the Sacrifice of Christ, their eyes fill with tears, for they know what you mean. Every battlefield commands a view of Calvary's Hill.

A specific case occurs to me. When I went back to preach at my old church some time ago, a lady came and told me about her son, who had been out in France all last winter. He was always a good dutiful lad, but had never definitely professed any religious faith. His mother's prayers, unanswered through the years when he was in the old home, bore fruit when he found himself on the field of battle. The life out there, its dangers, its privations, its loneliness, made him thoughtful, and one night in the trenches, as he stood on sentry duty, he came to a knowledge of the truth. He saw in a flash the big fact that all he had been taught at home, at Sunday school and

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at church was eternally true. He wrote and told his mother about it—how in the silence of the night, with his sleeping comrades round him, within two hundred yards of the enemy's trench, he took off his cap and said, "I believe in God and in Christ, my Saviour." That is not an isolated case. Such wonderful experiences have come to many a lad, and the trench has been a veritable Damascus road; others who have had no such glorious moment of revelation have a remarkable reverence for the things of the spirit.

Do you wonder, then, that when the lads come home with such serious and true views of life and God they will long for a great simplicity and directness in our preaching? But, along with this simplicity in the proclamation of the Gospel, our men will also expect the note of absolute frankness in the pulpit. There is no reason to fear that the man who has gone through the hardships and terrors of the war, and faced death calmly, will be upset at the most candid treatment of Biblical and religious questions. On the contrary, the mind of the modern soldier is keen to learn, and the

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minister who is fearlessly instructive will keep his hold upon the young men who come under his ministry on their return from the war.

A few months ago I was holding Sunday evening services in a cinema theatre in a village behind the line. One night I announced that I would welcome any questions bearing on religious and moral issues, to be sent in to me during the week, and I would try to reply to them the following Sunday. A large number of questions were sent in, bearing on all sorts of subjects, from the Creation of the World to Sunday football. I did my best to answer them, and then threw the meeting open for further questions and discussion. Man after man spoke, and it was positively thrilling to find how keen they were to get hold of the truth on any and every topic. Sometimes I was much puzzled to find a good answer, and I daresay that the learned theologians in this Assembly would have blushed at my stupidity. But the meeting was a complete success, because there was absolute frankness all round. Every man said exactly what he thought, and

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we were all anxious to get enlightenment. Am I not right in thinking that our returning soldiers will welcome the utmost candour in the pulpit ? When a minister knows the mind of his young men, and the young men know the mind of their minister, none need tremble for the Faith.

Again, the returning soldier will welcome the note of sympathy in our preaching. He will listen to the man who understands him. One thing my chaplaincy has taught me—what hosts of young fellows there are who have lost all connection with the Church and make no profession of religion, but are wonderfully fine fellows when you get to know them. You simply can't help liking them. They are so bright, generous-hearted, full of laughter and fun, and capable of great nobility and self-sacrifice in the hour of need. Why is it that we have lost them, and is there not yet time to win them back ?

Here is a striking fact. Men sometimes speak to me about their ministers—always with respect and sometimes with enthusiasm ; and I have noticed that the ministers who are

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praised to the skies are those who have taken the trouble to become a real friend to their young men. It is not the eloquent sermon that is recalled with pleasure out there, but a quiet talk by the study fire or an afternoon's ramble across the moor. Is that not significant of much, and does it not point the way to a permanent success among young men? Suppose for one moment that when our soldiers come home at the conclusion of the war every minister of every denomination in the land made this resolution and kept it, that one evening a week would be kept absolutely free for the young men of his church and neighbourhood. On that evening he would be at home in his manse or vicarage as the case might be for any young fellow who cared to come along to spend an hour or two profitably and pleasantly. If that friendly custom were established throughout the country, in city, town and village, and loyally adhered to by every minister of religion, the young manhood of England would be won and kept for Christ and the Church. I confess that I am preaching what I did not practice, but my recent ex-

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periences in the army convince me that success out of all proportion to the effort involved would justify and crown the venture. Remember, too, that your sympathy will be needed in another way when the lads come home. Not all of them will return in the full vigour of health. There will be the maimed, the broken, the enfeebled. Some who went forth with swinging stride will come back on crutches. Others will be shattered nervously. And saddest of all—some will return without their sight. Suppose one Sabbath morning a lad came into your church, and, groping his sightless way to his father's pew, took his old familiar place—would you have sympathy enough to say the right word, and refrain from saying the wrong one? You might fail there—most of us would, but woe to that minister who failed to give his friendship for evermore to that blind boy.

The returning soldiers will look for something else from the Church—a helpful and mediating attitude on social questions. The men in the trenches are thinking and saying this—the war has involved tremendous sacrifice. Whether

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you think of it in terms of men or treasure, it is beyond reckoning. It has all been poured out willingly and gladly for the sake of England—must we not make England worthy of it in days to come? Seeing that so many have bled and died that England may live, must England not be made a better, purer, happier land? Shall we not solve the temperance problem once for all? Shall we not put an end to the open shame of the streets at night? Shall we not make English life, whether in town or village, a worthier and more gracious thing, redeeming the city from its sordidness and the countryside from its monotony? This is the logic of the trenches.

“Ah, then,” you say, “you predict political and social strife when the grim struggle on the Continent is over? War at home to follow war abroad?” I think not, for this reason: our present army is thoroughly democratic; class distinctions have vanished. You make your way along a front line trench and talk to the men as you proceed—who are they? The first man is a mill hand from Lancashire; the second a solicitor from London; the third a

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miner from Northumberland; the fourth a farmer from Western Canada; the fifth the son of a Scottish laird and the heir to great wealth. These men—from all classes of the community—have lived together for months, and have got to know one another intimately. What will be the result of that mingling of all ranks of society on the future life of England? Never again, let us hope, will the old misunderstandings between capital and labour arise in the same acute and bitter form. When the Socialistic firebrand is preparing his diatribe against the selfishness of capitalists, he may remember that it was a man of that class who risked his life to bring him a drink of water on the battlefield of Neuve Chapelle, and he will moderate his indictment. And when the rich employer of labour feels inclined to refuse the advance of another penny to his workmen, he may recall the fact that it was a rough labouring chap that sacrificed his life in carrying him to shelter when he lay exposed to the enemy's fire in far-off Gallipoli; and he will show a more generous spirit in the trade dispute. It is for the Church to foster this spirit of a better

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understanding between class and class, and keep alive the comradeship that was born in the war. Thus, many of our vexed social questions will be solved—not in Parliament nor in the Labour Congress, but on the battlefields of Europe.

I should fail in my duty to the men at the Front if I omitted to tell you how keenly many of them are interested in Church Union, and expectant of developments in the near future. That for which many of you have hoped and prayed for long years has been realised out in France. Free Churchmen of all denominations meet together for common worship every Sunday, and I can bear witness that the union of the four Churches—Baptist, Congregational, Primitive and United Methodist—has been completely successful in every respect. If union is possible on the field of battle, what hinders it at home? More than that, Anglicans and Free Churchmen in many cases work together, and offer all the help they can. As a Church of England padre said to me last week, "If we cannot work together now, we are not worthy to be called Christians." Even more may be said. One of my closest friends out

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there is a Roman Catholic chaplain, and when the day's work is over we often have a quiet chat together. Sometimes the talk turns upon the deep things of God, and there we find ourselves in agreement; our fellowship is very precious. At the Front there is one Fold and one Shepherd.

If this war should speed the re-union of all Christendom, it will not have been waged in vain. Sometimes we despair of any good coming out of a thing so evil and so cruel. Let us recall the words which Carlyle wrote many years ago, but which, we have been reminded, express our faith to-day:—

“Man has walked by the light of conflagrations and amidst the sound of falling cities, and now there is darkness, and long watching till it be morning. The voices even of the faithful can but exclaim :

“As yet struggles the twelfth hour of the night; birds of darkness are on the wing, spectres uprise, the dead walk, the living dream. Thou, Eternal Providence, wilt cause the day to dawn.”

XV

OUR REFUGE IN WAR TIME

Sermon preached at Seacombe Congregational Church on
September 14th, 1914.

"The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob
is our refuge."—PSALM xlv. 7.

It is good for man to remember that the Lord of Hosts is with us. God holds the entire universe in the hollow of His hand, and that truth steadies and comforts us in the hour of peril. The majesty of God is a conception that makes men strong. Calvinism as a system of doctrine may be subjected to severe criticism, but it had this truth at the heart of it—a firm, unwavering belief in the power of God; a conception of the Divine Sovereignty that is eternally true. We may lay it down as an axiom that only those people who believe passionately in an Omnipotent God ever attain to greatness in thought or action.

But in these times of trouble and anxiety we need something more than these high conceptions of the Divine Power can supply. We

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cannot altogether find peace in the thought of God's infinitude ; we cannot rest in the idea of the Divine immensity ; we find no warmth in these cold, austere beliefs, and it is for this reason that we welcome the wonderful contrast of our text. "The Lord of Hosts is with us"—how awesome, how majestic, how full of grandeur ! "The God of Jacob is our refuge"—how intimate, how personal, how friendly, how tender ! The transition is certainly abrupt and complete. We turn from the God of the multitude to the God of the individual. We come from the God of the human race to the God of one man. We pass from the God of the whole universe to the God of a poor, weak human being. We are well acquainted with the very human biography of Jacob, and have doubtless discovered that there are things in this man's life that make an appeal to each one of us. We speak his language, feel his emotions, see his visions, live his life and know his God. Jacob is one of us. We are at home in his presence. We understand him. He is no dim figure living in some far past age. He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. There is

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much of Jacob in all of us ; there are chapters in his life story that would fit into any human biography. Thus the assurance of our text comes to us with real meaning and deep comfort : "The God of Jacob is our refuge."

The first fact in the life of Jacob that strikes pity to the heart is that he was a *lonely* man. When he made that hurried departure from his father's house and set out for a distant land one of his severest punishments was his loneliness. I think he missed his mother's love, his father's care—and yes, even the comradeship of the brother he had wronged. It was his first time away from home, and if a tear strayed down his cheek as he pursued his pilgrim way, it was the tear of loneliness. Yet God was with him. And the God of that lonely, solitary lad, hurrying by himself across the desert, is our God. So do we come to this heartening truth—our God is the God of the lonely.

There is the loneliness of sin. Robert Louis Stevenson in one of his most poignant stories, "Ebb Tide," gives us a realistic picture of the loneliness of sin. Three or four wasters are

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sitting upon the shore of one of the South Sea Islands. They are all men who have gone wrong in the Old Country, and are now drifting aimlessly about the world. Stevenson's description of these men's thoughts and feelings is one of the truest things in literature, and the fact that stands out supremely is this—these men are solitary beings, living alone in a world of sin, shame and vice. They knew that they were unfitted to take a place again in honourable society, exiled by the guilt of their deeds and the blackness of their hearts. Theirs was the loneliness of sin, and no punishment could be heavier.

But just as there is a loneliness in the world of darkness, so there may be a loneliness in the world of light. A man can be lonely because he has sinned himself out of human sympathy and friendship ; it is a stranger truth that the noblest souls also walk by themselves because they have risen above our common thoughts and experience, and live in a realm of their own. The classic example of such loneliness is Robertson of Brighton. He was misunderstood by the religious world of his day, sus-

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pected and avoided by many of his brethren in the ministry. He paid a heavy price for his loyalty to the truth as he knew it ; he became a lonely man. Yet, when one comes to think of it, he was but sharing the experience of his Master. No one was more lonely than Jesus. Rich in sympathy, friendly towards the needy, companionable and kindly always, Jesus was yet in His inmost heart the most lonely of men. "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," was His own testimony, and He meant that in a very deep sense.

In this time of war there is much loneliness everywhere, and there is a message here for our help. Our Father in Heaven hath a heart of infinite tenderness, and His assurance brings consolation and cheer. To every mother who has given her beloved son to fight for his country He whispers, "I am the God of the lonely." To every father who has proudly parted with his boy that he may enlist in the armies of the free He gives His promise, "I am the God of the lonely." To every wife who has sent her husband forth to battle comes the same solemn word, "I am the God of the

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lonely." To every girl who has given her lover to the war He says, "I am the God of the lonely." The Father's heart reaches out to all His children in these times, but especially toward those that are lonely. Remember that in your solitary moments. Remember that when you long for the presence of those who have gone from you—the God of the lonely Jacob is our refuge.

We now come to that memorable scene enacted at Bethel—that never to be forgotten vision of the ladder stretched from earth to heaven. It was that heavenly experience that gave Jacob his place among the immortals. It is a sure index of his character. He was a seer, a dreamer, sensitive to higher things, full of deep longings. There was a *wistfulness* about Jacob that we cannot mistake, and so we are led to our second heartening truth—our God is the God of the wistful. The wistful note is absent from few lives. It is found almost universally. I believe we should all be astonished did we but know from what unpromising lives the cry has gone forth for a better finer, braver life. There is a streak of

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idealism in all our hearts. We may not be able to express it in language. We may not have the power of communicating our secret to others. We may not call ourselves idealists or realise that we have a vision of beautiful and holy things, but the thrilling fact cannot be denied. A modern writer, as yet unknown to fame, gathers such aspiration into a few simple lines and gives a sort of present-day expression of Jacob's experience at Bethel :—

“ In summer, idly wandering on the hills,
A book of tuneful verses in my hand,
I seem to hear in music of the rills
A message that I fain would understand.
And when the sunset flames low in the sky,
With drifting clouds of gold across the blue,
A voiceless longing thrills me for the high
Fair paths that lead to regions strangely new.
A longing I can scarcely comprehend
For things so far, so very far away,
For those clear notes that with life's discords blend
Resolving them in gladness ; for the day
When no regret is borne on any breeze,
And undimmed glory sweeps the forest trees.”

This longing “ for things so far, so very far away,” throbbed in Jacob's heart, and it throbs in our hearts. This is specially the case

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to-day, when Europe is shaken to its foundations, and life has suddenly become a terrible thing. We long for a different order of things, for a world in which law and not chaos reigns. We have become afraid of the times in which we find ourselves, and our souls go out in passionate longing for a new world-order in which peace and love shall hold sway. I can see that wistful longing on every face in this congregation to-night ; and this idealism is the hope of the future. Let Bethel become a reality for all of us ; let Jacob's ladder be set up in all our lives, and every effort made to realise the vision and bring the angel-life into actuality. I want to see that ladder set up in every home so that family life may be modelled on the pattern of the Father's hearth. I want to see that ladder set up in every business house that the integrity of heaven may be infused into all commercial transactions. Above all, I want to see that ladder set up in every Chancellery of Europe that the principles of brotherhood and justice may become the mainspring of international politics. Our God is the God of the wistful. He brings us to Bethel ; He

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shows us the angel-crowded ladder ; and He would have us see that vision and make it the lode-star of our pilgrimage.

A third experience in Jacob's life must still be mentioned. One memorable night he wrestled with an angel until the dawn, and then as the morning light broke over the earth the angel touched his thigh and disabled him for ever. That disablement was as the touch of God, and so we come to our third heartening truth : our God is the God of the *disabled*.

Some weeks ago I sailed up the St. Lawrence—that noblest of all the earth's waterways. It was a perfect evening ; the moonlight shone upon the quiet river, and the distant hills stood out against the sky in clear outline. And some one said to me, "It was just here that the *Empress of Ireland* sank to its doom three months ago." We spoke about the calamity, and my friend added that there was no hope of salving the ship. Divers had examined the situation, and their report was that the vessel sank in too deep water and was probably so disabled as to be beyond human reach or aid. As I looked down at the dark waters, the

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thought came to me—our God is the God of the disabled. No waters are too deep for Him. No wreck is beyond His aid. No human craft can sink beyond His reach, for “underneath are the Everlasting Arms.” The disabled of body are in His care. The disabled in mind invoke His pity and help. The disabled in character call forth His tenderest solicitude. We have long talked of the horrors of modern warfare ; now the actuality is before our eyes. The battlefields of Europe are already stained with blood, and who can put a limit to the sacrifice that must yet be made ? I can but offer this word of comfort—our God is the God of the disabled. Even amid the roar of the cannon and the carnage of war, our God is there—tending, loving, cheering, comforting the wounded and dying. He it is Who whispers courage and peace to those who fall in the fight. He it is Who brings comfort into the homes from which men have gone forth at the call of duty. He is with all the wounded these days—the wounded in body or soul. The God of the wounded Jacob is our refuge.

Let me try to gather these truths together in

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a closing word. Mark Guy Pearse once went to visit a poor girl who was dying and sought to bring her comfort in the last hours of life. But so great was her weakness that she could not bear speech. So Mark Guy Pearse drew a little sketch. I saw it the other day in Montreal, and it was very simple and beautiful: a stretch of water; hills in the distance; and a solitary bird flying home very low over the face of the water—flying low, for a wing was injured and it was very tired. The picture was shown to the girl, and she recognised in the solitary, disabled bird the symbol of her own soul going home to God. What is your life? What is the life of millions of men and women in these days of war and bloodshed and death? A solitary bird with tired wings going home to God. Even so, we despair not, for we have a God who can meet our need. Our God is the God of the lonely, the wistful, the disabled.

The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

XVI

THE OUT-STRETCHED ARM

Sermon preached at Clipstone Park Camp, Mansfield, on
July 19th, 1915.

"I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm."—
Exodus vi. 6.

Not long ago I had a conversation with a wounded soldier. He told me with all a soldier's modesty of his experiences in France. So vivid and realistic was his tale that one could almost hear the booming of the guns, and feel the horror of actual warfare. There is something infinitely pathetic yet truly fascinating about a fighter who has come back from the war. He is like a pilgrim from some strange and terrible land, bringing tidings so appalling that one can only listen in solemn silence. I asked him about his wound. He had been hit on the arm, and so severe was the wound that complete recovery would be impossible. He described in a most matter-of-fact manner how it occurred, and he ended by saying with characteristic cheerfulness how

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thankful he was that it was no worse. "The doctors say," he remarked, "that I shall never be able to stretch it out and use it like the other; but I escaped with my life and am grateful for that."

The incident made a deep impression on my mind. He was quite unconsciously displaying the spirit of the hero. Simple, plain-spoken, kind-hearted soldier that he was, he had no idea that there was any special virtue about him. He was wounded and would carry the evidence of that wound to the grave, yet he smiled about it. His simple words I shall never forget, for they were instinct with that kind of courage which only God can give. And when I came to the preparation of this message, the word of that soldier and the word of God mingled together in a sweet and solemn harmony: "I shall never be able to stretch it out"; and, "I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm." The former is the cry from the hospital; the latter is the cry from heaven. The contrast could hardly be greater. "I shall never be able to stretch it out"—there speaks man in his weakness. "I will

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redeem you with a stretched-out arm"—there speaks God in His strength. First we have humanity, wounded, incapacitated, laid low ; then we have God, almighty, all-knowing infinite in kindness and love. And it is my purpose to lead your thoughts away from our human need—away from wounds and pain, tears and loss, which are the tragic consequences of war—away from this present valley of shadow unto those Divine heights of strength where God reigns, unto the hills from whence doth come our aid.

“The arm of the Lord out-stretched” is our theme, and we may ask, What can an out-stretched arm accomplish ? What purposes lie within its scope ? The answer will reveal something of the power that God exercises in human life, and, first, let us say, the arm of the Lord is stretched out *to strike*.

The picture of the clenched hand of the Almighty raises the whole question of Divine Providence. Does God take part actively in human affairs ? Does He, for instance, answer prayer ? There is one fact that I always cling to—Jesus believed that God answered prayer.

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For Christ prayer was more than a spiritual exercise—it reached the ear and heart of God ; it was an effectual petition. When Jesus went into the wilderness to spend the night in prayer, that vigil was a terribly solemn and sacred undertaking ; He was speaking to God. He did not gaze into the starry heavens and breathe His petitions thitherward, knowing that they reached no further than the sound of the whispered word. He did not entreat and agonise and plead with the consciousness that His entreaty and agony were but the gymnastics of the soul whereby His inner nature was developed. He did not meet His disciples in the morning with shining, glorified face with only *that* satisfaction in His heart. My understanding of Christ is as dim as a November twilight if that is how He regarded prayer. When Jesus went out to the solitary hills above Capernaum to pray, things happened that are not dreamed of in most men's philosophy. There was communion between earth and heaven. Jesus cried, "My Father," and God answered, "My Son." Jesus put out His hand in His loneliness ; His Father grasped and

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held it. Jesus bent His head—it rested on the bosom of God. Jesus prayed, and God answered His prayer. Jesus sought for Divine help, and, if the earth had to stand still first, God would answer that prayer.

If the experiences of ministers in these tempestuous times were recorded, we should all say that the question most frequently asked us is this : Does God answer prayer ? Fathers and mothers want to know if it is any good praying for their boys fighting in France, or sailing the treacherous deep. Are their sobs heard in heaven ? And we all want to know if it is any use praying about the war. Will our prayers make any difference ? God is on the side of the big battalions, we are told, and nothing else matters. We have yet to learn that big battalions will not be the decisive factor in this war. When a nation has given its best in a righteous cause, holding back nothing, but surrendering all in a glad sacrifice, God will see to the rest. “I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm,” is His promise, and that arm will strike the decisive blow. A story about Viscount French may be recalled.

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The famous soldier once entered a railway carriage where two men were discussing who was the greater general, Napoleon or Wellington. They had just agreed that Wellington was the greater, and seeing that French was a soldier, they asked his opinion. Very courteously he showed at length that Napoleon was infinitely the greater general. "Well, then, who won Waterloo?" was the very natural question. French paused a moment and then said very quietly, "God won Waterloo." The answer was a revelation of true faith, and it is the kind of faith we need to-day. Amid all the fluctuations of the world war, let us remember that the final decision is with God. We shall win the war when we are worthy of winning it, and not before.

We may also say that the arm of the Lord is stretched out to *direct*. Here is the Divine ministry of guidance, the finger pointing towards the dawn, the hand indicating the upward path. George Adam Smith tells of a striking incident that took place in France some years ago. He was travelling towards Rouen with a young priest of the Roman Catholic

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Church. In conversation it came out that the young priest was going to the Congo as a missionary. "I am now going to Rouen to see my mother for the last time," he remarked. "But why the *last* time?" asked Dr. Smith. "Because the life of a missionary in the region to which I am going is two and a half years," was the reply. He had seen the outstretched hand of the Lord, directing him to the Congo, and it was enough.

I do not want to overstate the present position—I do not wish to endow the present hour with a spiritual glamour it does not possess, but I say to you now that the farewell of that priest to his mother in Rouen is repeated in a hundred thousand homes to-day. The directing hand has been seen, and the stony path has been chosen. This is a day for unselfishness and sacrifice. The mean, selfish man who has successfully cloaked the barrenness of his soul through long years will now be found out. It is a testing hour, and the test is this—are we willing to follow the directing hand of God? It points towards the battlefield, towards wounds and suffering, yea, towards death

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itself. Are we afraid? Do we turn away from that directing hand, pretending we see it not? Thank God, the sons of England are not found wanting. God has called them and they are answering the call. The Divine finger points toward a Calvary, and they will climb the hill till they come to a cross.

But the ministry of the outstretched arm is not exhausted when it has shown its power to strike, its ability to direct. There is something even more precious—the arm of the Lord is stretched out *to bless*.

How can we reconcile the holiness of God with His love? How can moral austerity and tender affection both have a place in His dealings with us? How does it come about that the Divine hand, which sternly points out the thorny path of duty and sacrifice, is the same hand that is held over us in the attitude of blessing? There are these two conceptions of God and both are true. "Our God is a consuming fire," and we have a vision of His flaming righteousness. "God is love," and we have a vision of His infinite pity. Can

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there be any reconciliation between such sternness and such gentleness ?

Here is a fisherman out on the stormy sea. It is a night of tempest and the little craft is in danger. Look at that man in his work ; see his strong hands with their iron grip as he pulls at the ropes that hoist or lower the sail ; observe the tremendous strength of his body as he strains and struggles at the task of fighting the tempest ; watch his face—there is tempest there as well as on the watery deep. The sailor, in the grip of the storm, becomes like the storm—relentless, stern, fierce as the hurricane itself. See him a few days later, as he hurries towards his cottage home. His child comes to meet him, and he clasps her in his arms, but how tenderly. But the man who carries his babe with the gentleness of a mother fought the Atlantic storm with the ferocity of a tiger ; and the face that was grim and stern in the night of tempest is now wreathed in tender smiles. Here we behold strength allied to gentleness ; power linked with tenderness ; austerity wedded to love

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Parables are but feeble things, but they help us towards the truth. God's nature is comprehensive, and there is no worthy element in human life that is not derived from Him. Every true man must be stern, unyielding, austere when the storms are beating about him, and he has to fight as though for his life. Every true man also comes to occasions in life where only love and pity have a place. Surely the life and experience of God must be as varied as ours. He also has His nights of storm, His critical hours in His ruling of the world, when only His austerity can avail anything ; but the terrible hour passes, and His love, hidden by the storm-clouds, shines out in renewed tenderness. His love-song, drowned for a time by the noise of the tempest, rings out in sweetest cadence. We have all had the experience of God as Judge, and we have heard His irrevocable decisions, His stern judgments. Then we have said, " Our God is a consuming fire." But a tenderer hour comes when we only know that He is compassionate and kind. The consuming fire we no longer see—only a gentle flame upon the hearthstone. God is

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our Father ; we kneel before Him, and His arm is stretched out to bless.

Once more the arm of the Lord is stretched out *to beckon*—to beckon His loved ones to Himself, and this is the crowning ministry of the outstretched arm. A lady in my church—a woman of fine spiritual insight and mystic temperament—said to me not long ago, “ I wonder what God thinks of all that is happening in Europe just now ? ” I asked her to tell me of what she was specially thinking, and she replied, “ I wonder what God thinks when He sees so many coming home to Him at once. Never before has the door of the heavenly mansion been so crowded. And so many of them are so young—boys with fresh, eager faces, men with all the splendour of life still before them. Surely the youth of heaven is being renewed, and the many mansions in the Father’s house will resound with youthful laughter. I wonder what God thinks of it.”

I thought that that was a very beautiful conception—God receiving the youth of the world to Himself in these times of war. It is not for us to know what thoughts are in the Divine

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mind, what feelings surge in His bosom, but one can at least know this—when He sees them coming in such numbers as never before, His arm is stretched out to beckon—to beckon them to Himself. “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden” is His gracious invitation to every one of us, and the home of our hearts is in the bosom of God.

XVII

THE DYING SEED AND THE LIVING HARVEST

Sermon preached at Tidworth Barracks, Salisbury Plain,
September 24th, 1915.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”—
JOHN xii. 24.

THIS is one of the deepest sayings in the deepest of the Gospels ; one of the most beautiful words that ever fell from the lips of Christ, whose speech was always beautiful ; one of the truest declarations that ever came from Him who was the Truth. As one stands before a flower of perfect purity, hesitating to pluck it lest one's touch mar its beauty, so does one stand before such a text as this, reluctant to speak about it, knowing that its finest message can never be expressed, but only recognised and experienced. Jesus was the supreme Teacher, and He knew how to compress a whole kingdom of truth into one brief sentence.

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He wanted to enunciate a mighty principle ; He desired to lay down a universal law ; He wished to speak of the necessity of His sacrificial death, and—instead of holding forth at great length on such stupendous themes—He spoke the shortest of all parables—“ Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” Only Jesus could represent the height and depth, the length and breadth of sacrificial love by means of so little and insignificant a thing as a corn of wheat.

The truth of His statement could not be questioned. A grain of corn, lying upon the hard ground and refusing to be absorbed by the soil, refusing to pass through that strange process by which it would spring to life, remains but a grain of corn. But when it is sown in the tilled soil of the field, when its life as a grain is given up that it may issue as part of a fresh harvest, “ it bringeth forth much fruit.” Everyone who heard this beautiful little parable could vouch for the truth of the assumption upon which it was based. Every farmer in Palestine knew that it was true to

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nature ; did not seed time and harvest proclaim it every year ? So far Jesus had said nothing startling or fresh ; He had merely mentioned a commonplace of agriculture. But it was the genius of Christ to take the commonplace facts of life and link them up with eternal verities, to shed fresh light on the obvious, to add new lustre to the prosaic, to knit together the entire world of truth into one glorious whole. The corn of wheat that remained alone witnessed to the uselessness of the selfish life. The corn of wheat that died and brought forth much fruit declared the glory of the sacrificial life, the power and achievements of the Cross.

Jesus was seeking to vindicate His own life, which was always the life of suffering and sacrifice. The Cross lay athwart it from the cradle to the grave. Christ was dying upon Calvary from the moment that He became conscious of His Divine mission, and He went on dying that death all through His earthly life. Now that the actual end was drawing near He wanted to show the world that the way of the Cross was the only way worth going.

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His vindication was this : if He had lived the selfish life and refused to die for men, He would have been isolated from humanity, cut asunder from all influence over men, deprived of sympathy with their needs and power to help them in their sorrows. The selfish life means isolation—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." But because He had chosen the unselfish life and embraced the sacrificial death, He had the great reward of influence over the human heart, power to draw men to Himself. The unselfish life links itself with the needs of men and so can minister to them. The sacrificial spirit always reaps an abundant harvest in service and blessedness—"But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Picture for a moment what kind of life Christ's would have been, if, instead of seeking a Cross He had been seeking a throne. Try to imagine Jesus having as His goal not Calvary's Hill, but the pomp and splendour of Cæsar's court. Dr. John Smith, a Scottish minister of the last generation, tells of a visit he paid to the springs of the river Jordan. A medical

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missionary was there, tending to a large crowd of people who had come to him with their ailments. Dr. Smith looked at the faces of these poor folk, and saw there infinite gratitude and love for the medical missionary who was giving his life for their sakes. So struck was he by the tender love that shone from their eyes that he exclaimed to a friend—"Look! that is the very gaze that greeted Christ as He went up and down this land." That was a saying of deep insight. I believe that next to the unspeakable loveliness of Christ's face must have been the tenderness upon the faces of those whom He cared for, and healed, and helped. The love in His heart stirred the love in theirs. Deep called unto deep, and His unselfishness awoke the slumbering goodness in a thousand breasts.

But suppose Jesus had gone about Palestine seeking His own ends! Suppose He was always on the outlook for His own advantage! Suppose He had trampled the Cross in the dust and exalted a throne as His ideal! What then? Why, there would have been no look of gratitude on the faces of the people, no

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tenderness in their eyes, no love in their hearts, no worship in their souls. Even Christ could not have it both ways, and if He had been selfish He would have been isolated and therefore without fruitfulness. On the north coast of Devonshire, the ground rising from the sea is richly wooded in many places. You may wander along the well-wooded shore for miles until you come upon a piece of land jutting out into the sea. No trees grow upon it; it is quite bare and barren, and in startling contrast to the rest of the shore. Looking at your map, you discover that it is called, "Desolation Point." So hard and rocky is it that cultivation is almost impossible. Suppose that Christ had lived the selfish life! I say it would have been like some Desolation Point, standing out in terrible isolation on the shores of humanity. It would possess grandeur, but no winsomeness; majesty but no mercy; power but no tenderness. Selfishness always means isolation, and even Jesus could not have been an exception to the rule. Christ found humanity because He lost Himself in seeking its good. He lives on in you and me to-day because He died for

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us. He is like the grain of corn : " If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

What are the penalties of selfishness ?

The first, I think, is the devastation which it will bring about in our own souls. Selfishness is a cruel tax-gatherer, imposing heavy levies upon the life of the spirit. It stamps out noble emotions and destroys sacred aspirations. It is a tyrant without pity, and is not satisfied until it has taken away every vestige of love and generosity.

When Leonardo da Vinci began to paint his great picture, "The Last Supper," he had great difficulty in finding a man who might sit for the likeness of Jesus. At last he came across a young Italian with a fine, spiritual face, and with eyes that seemed to look out upon the world with love. The artist persuaded him to sit, and, when the portrait was finished, he felt satisfied that he could not have secured a face more fitted to represent the face of Christ. He went on with the work, and it was a task that took many years. He painted the disciples, one after the other, until all were represented except Judas. Then there was a

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delay. Leonardo da Vinci searched high and low for a face that might be like that of the Betrayer ; and he had almost despaired in his quest when he came across a man with an extraordinarily cunning, hard and selfish face. The artist knew that he had found his man ; when the picture was finished, Leonardo da Vinci asked him his name. "Do you not remember me ?" he said, "I sat for your Jesus a few years ago." Sin and selfishness had wrought the change. Not love but hate had burned in his heart through the intervening years, and selfish cunning had taken the place of the sympathy that formerly shone from his face. Jesus !—Judas ! There is a terrible chasm between these two, but selfishness is a bridge that can span any gulf, however wide and deep, between good and evil. The selfish life loses all fine, generous impulses and becomes useless and negligible. The curse of the grain of seed that does not die is upon it—"it abideth alone." It is said that in certain places in the south of Europe there is a plant which, growing in fresh water, puts forth long stems, and, by a series of spiral curves reaches

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the surface of the water and blossoms. It is not until it emerges from the water, and comes in contact with the pure air that it blossoms, and it is even so in human life. So long as your life is submerged by selfish considerations and overwhelmed by personal anxieties, it can have no beauty. But, when it emerges into the pure atmosphere of love and service, it blossoms.

That is the first penalty of selfishness—it destroys a man's soul. The second is equally serious—it destroys all influence for good. The greatest and most glorious mystery of Christianity is the continuing influence and power of Christ's death. And the explanation that gets as near to the heart of that mystery as reason can go is that the death of Jesus was a voluntary act of pure unselfishness, the surrender of all in obedience to the promptings of love. If you look at the Crucifixion from the point of view of a Jew of that day, it must have appeared a very ordinary and discreditable affair. Jesus had made certain audacious claims which had brought Him into conflict with the ruling classes. The autho-

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rities had tried Him and condemned Him to crucifixion—the felon's death. Two thieves suffered the extreme penalty at the same time, and altogether it was a very disgraceful and shameful affair. But when we remember the real facts, how different does that Death appear! Jesus died of His own free will and gladly. If He had not chosen to die, it has been finely said, not all the nails in Jerusalem would have sufficed to fasten Him to the Cross; not all the ropes in Palestine could have bound Him there. It was a free choice, and it is that choice, dictated by love, that gives glory to Calvary. I find redemption and peace in the Cross, because the Cross was perfect love, perfect unselfishness, making its supreme surrender for my sake.

Why does the death of the soldier upon the battlefield stir our hearts and command our admiration and reverence? Because that going forth to the field of death is the free act of a free man, the willing deed of an unselfish man. He died, and he might have lived! It is that unselfish element in a soldier's death that makes it glorious, and lifts up the heart

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of those who have lost their beloved in the war. So, whether living or dying, let us bow to this law of the spirit—our influence for good is in the ratio of our unselfishness.

The third penalty of selfishness is this—the bright hope of a blessed immortality will not come to the loveless soul. Some days ago, having a few hours to spare, I set out to visit Eversley, the little Hampshire village where Charles Kingsley spent so many years of his life. As things turned out, I never reached the village, and I was disappointed, for I wanted to see the vicarage in which he had lived, and the church in which he preached. Most of all, perhaps, I wanted to see the tombstone above his grave and that of his wife, for I remembered from the biography that these words are to be read there :—

“Amavimus, amamus, amabimus.”

They express the secret of Charles Kingsley's life ; they also express the secret of Christianity. Jesus tells us of God's love in all its tenses—past, present and future, and when our love has been awakened by His, we shall know

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that it will endure for ever. The guarantee of eternity is the unselfish heart. Self-sacrifice carries in its bosom the seeds of immortality. Love lives on. "Amabimus! We shall love!" every loving heart may cry, and the Divine answer has been given us already: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."